

2026

PLTA Pack Trial Handbook



**Pack Llama Trail
Association**

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PLTA PACK TRIAL HANDBOOK

General Procedures, Regulations & Guidelines for PLTA Sanctioned Pack Trials

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SECTION 1. ABOUT THE PLTA

1.1 Introduction

The Pack Trail Llama Association, Inc. {PLTA} is a not-for-profit charitable and educational organization. The mission of the PLTA is to preserve and promote working llamas, through education of people, and members of the association as to breeding, raising, training, care, and safe and humane uses of working llamas as companions.

The PLTA was created in 1998 as a successor to the Western Idaho Llama Association (WILA) Pack Performance Llama Trials that were first held in 1995. Designed as a public event similar to performance trials for dogs or horses, this was the beginning of the concept of testing pack llamas against a written packing standard. The PLTA continues to test and recognize pack llama accomplishments. A full discussion of the history of the PLTA can be found at packllama.org on the About page.

The PLTA’s prime objective in promoting this concept is to discover and recognize llamas that can fulfill the llama packer’s needs on the trail by performing in a manner consistent with the demands of actual packing conditions. The intent is not to confront the llama with unrealistic or trick problems, rather, it is to test the llama’s ability and acquired level of training and conditioning. PLTA tests use natural and human-created obstacles in a manner found in normal packing situations. While realistic packing conditions are subject to variations in different parts of the country, PLTA certified pack llamas are expected to possess a defined set of skills that enable them to serve as valuable packing companions.



The PLTA recognizes the variability in how pack llamas are used. Not all pack llama owners use their animals on cross-country treks into the backcountry for weeks at a time, nor do they extensively use them to carry heavy loads, or to only traverse mountainous regions. A sizeable number of PLTA members use their pack llama to carry light loads on day trips or lunch outings, and often on relatively flat ground and across gentle terrain. PLTA pack trials are designed to be applicable to a wide variety of landscapes and corresponding packing demands.

PLTA Pack Trials are a measure of skill and fitness already attained. They are a test of the llama's current physical fitness, mental ability and skill. They are not an opportunity for training. The levels of certification available have been designed to recognize this. Gradations of fitness and skill required to successfully gain certification span four levels: Basic, Advanced, Master and Elite. Further recognizing that some owners work their llamas in groups or "strings", certification of this skill is available at each of the four levels.

1.2 Management Structure

The PLTA is a volunteer organization. All endeavors that make the organization function are the result of the unpaid efforts of individuals who are dedicated to supporting working llamas and their owners.

Board of Directors

While the PLTA Board of Directors strives to consider and support the desires of the organization membership, all responsibility for determining and maintaining pack trial standards and participation ultimately rests with the Board.

Event planners are advised that all service marks, trademarks, and copyright of the Pack Llama Trail Association, Inc., shall be respected and correctly used. Without hearing, any person, club or association who fails to abide by any of the requirements set forth herein may be suspended from all privileges of the PLTA by the Board of Directors. The Board may also, without hearing, refuse to allow entry of any person or llama in such events, for any failure of a llama's owner or handler to abide by the requirements established by the PLTA Board of Directors.

Pack Trial Governance Committee

To assist the Board of Directors a committee composed of knowledgeable and experienced PLTA members sit on the Pack Trial Governance Committee. These individuals review pack trial issues and make recommendations to the Board about how to best manage the trials. See Appendix 3.

Event Host

While the PLTA has established criteria for testing pack llamas with supportive authorization, information management and standardized testing structure, the Association does not conduct the trials or other sanctioned events. This responsibility falls to the Event Host who applies to the PLTA to sanction their event. The Event Host bears full responsibility for organizing the event and carrying out its activities in a safe and efficient manner.

1.3 PLTA Enrollment

Enrollment in the PLTA is available for llamas, guanacos and all persons interested in working with them. Once llamas or guanacos are registered, their enrollment is permanent. Enrollment for people is based on an annual renewal which runs from January 1st through December 31st of each year. For insurance purposes handlers and others wishing to participate in PLTA activities must, at minimum, be associate members.

Applying for member or associate status requires filling out the appropriate form and submitting it with payment to the PLTA. This may be done using a number of ways. Payment may be made electronically using PayPal on the Payment page of the PLTA website at packllama.org. Payment may be made through the postal service by sending a check or money order to the PLTA Treasurer. And, although it is discouraged because of the extra work it creates for the Event Host, payment may also be made in person at a PLTA event.

Enrollment requires the use of the PLTA Membership Application form which must be completely and accurately filled out and included with payment. The form is found on the PLTA website as a PDF file and can be filled out



and submitted electronically or in hardcopy. Completed forms should be sent to member@packllama.org or to the PLTA Secretary.

The status of membership may be confirmed with the PLTA Secretary.

Member

The PLTA Board of Directors has established membership options for individuals, families and youth groups. An individual membership applies to a single person whether youth or adult. A family membership in the PLTA includes two adults (18 years and older) plus children under the age of 18 living at the same residence, regardless of whether or not the children own llamas separately from their parents or siblings. Becoming a member allows you to register your llamas with the PLTA and registration is required for your llama to participate in PLTA sanctioned events and programs. Membership dues are paid annually. Please see section 2.7 Fees.

Benefits of membership in the PLTA include

- Standardized tests of llama performance
- Certificates of Achievement
- Lifetime registration for your llama
- Insurance and support for your PLTA sanctioned events
- Access to mentors
- Website featuring
 - Llama records and recognition
 - Event calendar and information
 - Articles and more
- Searchable database
- Facebook newsletter
- Opportunities to connect with other llama packers
- Support for the PLTA and working llamas everywhere

the opportunity to register your llama with the PLTA and thereby track its accomplishments in the PLTA database, participation in all PLTA events and programs, support and mentoring and insurance coverage for your PLTA sanctioned event, advertisement of your event on the website, and recognition of your llama(s)' accomplishments on the website. It also provides access to the event support and member contacts, and it provides you with the opportunity to have your contact information and ranch or business information displayed publicly on the PLTA website.

Associate

Associate status is required for insurance purposes for all persons participating in a PLTA sanctioned event, whether they handle llamas or not. This does not include programs in which individuals participate independently of organized events, since those are not insured activities. Associate status may be rolled into membership within the same calendar year by paying additional monies. Associate status does not include membership benefits. Payment of an Associate fee is required for participation on each *day* of a PLTA Event.

Llama Registration

To be registered with the PLTA, the llama's owner must be a PLTA member. Once registered the llama may participate in PLTA sanctioned programs and events, including pack trials. The llama stays on the PLTA roles throughout its life. Registration provides the llama with a unique tracking number that is used to record the llama's accomplishments and related data in the PLTA database. Use of the PLTA Llama Registration Form or the PLTA Membership Application and Pack Trial Entry form is required. Required registration information includes:

- Full name of the llama
- Date of birth if known
- Gender
- International Llama Registry number (ILR) if the llama has one



- Owner's PLTA account number
- Owner's name and contact information

For llamas that do not have an ILR number, the PLTA also requires two images of the animal. One must be taken showing a left side view and one must show a right-side view. These images must be clear and allow the animal to be fully recognizable.

The PLTA llama registration fee is a one-time only charge for each llama. The registration is transferable at no additional charge if the llama changes owners. This registration fee helps to cover the costs of entering that llama's information into the database, sending out the notice letters whenever the llama qualifies for a level of Pack Trial achievement, and production of a PLTA Certificate of Trial Completion.

In order for a llama to be registered, the llama's owner must be a current member in the PLTA. Registration in any other registry or group is not required. See the Payment page on the PLTA website at packllama.org for complete information about making payments.

1.4 Vocabulary

In the past, the word "trial" was used for many different portions of the PLTA pack llama evaluations. A broadening of the scope of PLTA programs as well as information management developments require such words to be used with greater discrimination, hence the definitions that follow.

Event

A PLTA "Event" is the entirety of a PLTA sanctioned gathering. It may include Pack Trials, Packers' Challenges, Packers Primers, workshops, seminars and more. It may last a single day or many. Events must be sanctioned with the PLTA Secretary. Fees are based on the number of days an event lasts

Activity

An "Activity" is a particular type of PLTA pursuit. Activities include challenges, trials, trainings and workshops.

Trial

A "Trial" is a single iteration of evaluating the llama against a written standard. Each trial consists of Manageability Tasks and a Field Test .Multiple trials must be completed to achieve certification at a particular level..

Manageability Tasks

Manageability Tasks are those activities a llama is expected to participate in while preparing to begin hiking. These include such things as haltering, loading and unloading in a vehicle, saddling and so forth.

Field Tests

Field Tests involve demonstrating llama's fitness level and ability to negotiate obstacles in a realistic packing environment. This includes two components, hiking a course over a route measured for distance and elevation gain, and negotiating obstacles typical of what a llama and handler may encounter during a pack trip.

Course

The pack trial course is the route taken during the field test. Courses are usually established, mapped and marked by the trial marshal. At all levels above Basic, they must be approved by a pack trial Certifier. Each course must fall within the PLTA distance and elevation gain parameters for a given level.

Obstacles

Pack trial obstacles are pre-selected impediments or obstructions found along the course that represent typical naturally occurring difficulties encountered during hiking or packing. These obstacles must meet PLTA standards and requirements and be appropriate to the level of pack trial for which they are being used. At all levels above



Basic, they must be approved by a pack trail certifier. Generally, obstacles are selected and marked prior to the pack trial by the Trial Marshal. To successfully complete a Field Test the llama must negotiate all obstacles on the course.

1.5 Pack Trial on Request

Pack Trial on Request adds open scheduling of pack trials outside of regular events to the options for certifying pack llamas. It facilitates members who have scheduling conflicts that preclude attendance at an officially sanctioned pack trial event and allows a certified field course to be used at their request and at the convenience of a supporting steward or certifier. If an owner is unable to attend a PLTA pack trial event, this option allows them to undertake a personal trial under the scrutiny of a steward or certifier who conducts the trial in the same manner as one held at a regular event.

Trials conducted on request may be held only on field courses that have been pre-certified by an authorized PLTA certifier. They must meet appropriate standards for mileage, elevation gain, and obstacles. PLTA membership, registered llamas, and all paperwork for certification are required. Upon completion, paperwork and fees must be delivered to the appropriate board members.

Paperwork includes:

- Sanctioning form
- Membership form (for new or renewing members and associates)
- llama registration for llamas new to the PLTA
- Liability releases for all participants
- Manageability score sheets
- Field test score sheet
- Trial results
- Financial summary

Specific parameters:

- This option is applicable to all levels, Basic through Elite
- Pack Trial on Request may only be used for 50% of trials required at any trial level. The other trials must be completed at an official public PLTA pack trial event. For example:
 - Basic certification requires two trials, Therefore, only one may be “trial on request”.
 - Advanced certification requires three or four trials, of which only one or two, respectively, can be “trial on request”.
- All field test courses must be pre-certified by an authorized PLTA certifier,
- Field test courses must have been previously used during official PLTA pack trial events.
- If a course has been set by an organization, that organization assumes responsibility as the trial host.
- The trial host is responsible for providing a map of field course(s) to be used during the requested trial(s) as well as delivering all necessary paperwork to the appropriate board members.
- It is the responsibility of the person requesting the trial to provide for aid in any emergency medical situation.
- If the person requesting the trial chooses to cover miscellaneous expenses of the steward or certifier, such as travel money, or providing meals, that is acceptable.
- If a certifier is not present at the trial, then one must be apprised of the trial and be on call to answer any questions that might arise.
- If a certifier is not present at the trial, then the steward’s qualifications will be reviewed and approved by the certifier prior to the trial.
- If a certifier is unable to answer a question or issue, it will be referred to the Pack Trial Governance Committee, for their input.
- Trust is the key phrase. It is the board’s expectation that all stewards and certifiers will use best common-sense practices for all trials.



SECTION 2. PACK TRIAL ADMINISTRATION

2.1 Purpose and Intent

The PLTA set up pack trials to support the organization's purpose by facilitating a social, non-competitive atmosphere where the pack llama is tested against a written standard in a realistic packing environment. One of the main objectives for participants is to experience an enjoyable and safe event with their pack llama and other packing enthusiasts. Other than going packing in the real-life outdoor environment, we believe that the PLTA provides the only organized, realistic packing events for people and their llamas that are not only social but provide useful testing grounds for their packers. Pack trials also provide wonderful opportunities for packing enthusiasts to observe and learn from all levels of experienced llama packers.

The llamas should be entered in the trial level for which they are fully trained and conditioned. PLTA sanctioned pack trials are formal tests and should not be considered training exercises. They are not a place to teach a llama to pack. Trials are not competitive events; it is the llama that earns certification, not the handler. Likewise, during pack trials llamas do not compete against each other, rather they are evaluated on an individual basis.

Natural packing conditions are expected to vary in different parts of the country, but by using a written standard and running a trial under the supervision of a PLTA Trial Certifier, the PLTA expects the trial to be set up with a constancy and equivalency between trials regardless of their geographic location.

Pack Trials measure three aspects of a llama's ability: attitude, skill and fitness. A llama successfully earning a PLTA certificate has shown that it has acquired appropriate skill in dealing with packing demands, it has an attitude suitable to the venture, and it has shown that it is properly physically conditioned to handle the demands of packing. Skill is measured by the number and types of obstacles the llama must deal with. Attitude is clearly demonstrated by the llama's willingness to complete the obstacles and the course. Fitness is measured by the llama's ability to complete a specific distance and elevation gain while carrying a load and within a specified amount of time.

2.2 Supporting Information

Besides providing an experienced person to give guidance and support to the Trial Host and Trial Committee, the PLTA also provides helpful written documentation.

Website

The PLTA maintains a website at www.packllama.org that contains all the information included in this document plus much more. It is an excellent source for learning what the PLTA is all about. Descriptions of PLTA Programs, lists of llama registrations and accomplishments, changes to regulations, updates, articles of interest, links, schedules, and contact information are posted here. Certifiers are required to be fully familiar with the website contents. It is strongly recommended that Event Hosts, Trial Committee members and event participants also be familiar with this information. Llama accomplishments are also posted here.

Pack Trial Field Notes

An abridged version of the Pack Trial Handbook, the Pack Trial Field Notes, contains the most essential information about pack trial administration. This is presented in the form of a small booklet easy to refer to in the field. For ease of reference, it is organized in the same manner as the Handbook.

Manual

Early in the history of PLTA pack trials, it was recognized that staging an event could be a challenging undertaking. To fill this need dedicated members of the association produced *'The PLTA Pack Trial Manual: How to put on a Pack Trial'* It originated as 'Mad's Manual', a set of pointers on how to run a successful pack trial. Past PLTA President Viv Fulton took this guide and expanded it to an excellent manual that provides detailed and step-by-step instructions for staging a trial that are useful for staging any event. Also known as the 'Yellow Book' from the color



of its cover it provides detailed assistance in planning a pack trial. Please note that the manual is out of date in terms of trial requirements.

Pack Trial in a Box: Setting up the Trial and Managing the Paperwork

It can happen that organizers arrive at a remote trailhead without the necessary items to get the event going. Simple things like a lack of pencils or the right forms can sidetrack months of planning. Based on decades of experience long-time members created an essential list of all the things you need for putting on a pack trial. The resulting document, *Pack Trial in a Box*, can be found for download on the PLTA website at <https://www.packllama.org/programs/pack-trials>. It can make your event a bit less adventurous at a time when you have all the adventure you need.

2.3 Event Sanctioning

Events sanctioned by the PLTA may be conducted by individuals, groups, clubs, or associations. Any member is eligible to schedule PLTA activities once their request for sanctioning has been approved. Application must be made using the PLTA Event Sanctioning form and accompanied by appropriate payment. Forms are available at packllama.org or from the PLTA Secretary. Fees may be paid via the website by using PayPal or by submission to the PLTA Treasurer. Fees must be submitted at the time of application.

Approval for sanctioned PLTA trails is granted solely by the PLTA Board of Directors. A sanction may be granted for any and all trial levels, or for any combination as long as the requirements for each level can be met by the Trial Host. All sanctions are non-transferable and are valid only for the dates indicated on the approved application unless prior approval has been given by the Board of Directors.

The official application and payment for sanctioned PLTA events must be filed with the PLTA Secretary at least four (4) weeks before the date of the trial. If application is made between four weeks and two (2) weeks prior to the dates of the event, a fine of \$25.00 will be assessed to the applicant. After two weeks prior to the event, no event will be sanctioned unless circumstances of undue hardship are approved by a two-thirds majority of the PLTA Board of Directors. After the one (1) week prior to the event, no event will be sanctioned. Payment of the fine will be made directly to the PLTA Treasurer and money will go directly into the PLTA account. This money must be separate from the fees obtained at the event. While this policy may seem harsh, please remember that paperwork and insurance requirements must be met and PLTA administrators are volunteers. It takes time to make sure all necessary pieces are in order for a safe and effective event.

Applicants for hosting a trial are encouraged to stage trial levels that are likely to match the capabilities of llama packers in their area. This should encourage a greater attendance and may encourage new people to become involved. If no trials have been run in the area before, the PLTA suggests that the event be staged over the course of a weekend, with a Packer's Primer workshop being held the first day and a Basic trial being held the next. There is no additional fee for the Packer's Primer if it is held in conjunction with a pack trial.

Protocol for Sanctioning Pack Trials

. When determining whether or not to sanction a PLTA pack trial, the PLTA Secretary or the Secretary's delegate will consider the following;

- Has a Trial Chairperson been identified?
- Has a Certifier been assigned?
- Have appropriate fees been paid?
- Is the date free from conflict with other llama activities in the area?
- Is the proposed venue appropriate?
- Is the host experienced? If not, is the Certifier available to provide mentoring? If the Certifier is not available for this, who is assigned to mentor the host?
- Does the host remain in good standing, after any trials they have hosted previously?



After these questions have been positively answered, the trial can be officially sanctioned. At this point the host may supply details to the PLTA website administrator for posting on the web and may begin advertising the event. Other than posting information on the Associations' website, the PLTA is not responsible for advertising or promoting an event.

2.4 Trial Entry

In order for a llama to participate in a pack trial the llama owner must be a member of the PLTA, and the llama must be registered with the PLTA. For insurance purposes handlers and other participants must be, at a minimum, associate members.

Entry in a pack trial shall be initiated through the presentation of an official PLTA Pack Trial Entry Form for each llama/handler team. The form must be completed in full and the information given on the form must be accurate. Each form must be signed by the owner who is responsible for all errors, or by the owner's agent duly authorized to make the entry.

It is strongly recommended that individuals become members, enroll handlers or other persons planning to attend the event as associates, and register their llamas prior to the event. Participants should plan to have their member and registration numbers in hand and entry forms filled out when they arrive. With the Event Host's permission, it is possible to join the PLTA and register their llamas with the PLTA at the time of entry in a trial by completing the membership section of the trial entry form and making payment of required fee(s) to the Trial Committee, however, this practice puts extra burden on the Event Host and should be avoided.

If required by the land manager, or at the option of the PLTA trial sponsoring entity, a numerical limit may be imposed on entrants in any and all levels offered at a particular event. If the number of entrants is to be limited, the numerical limitation must be stated in the advertising information for the event.

Non-PLTA participation fees that are generated specifically to support the Event Host's needs may vary between events. These fees may be required to support the activities offered and expenses incurred by the Trial Committee. The fees set by the PLTA and paid to the PLTA are described in this document. All other fees are determined by and are the responsibility of the Event Host. The PLTA has no input or claim on these fees; they are collected and used at the sole discretion of the event organizers.

Payment may be made using PayPal at www.packllama.org on the "Payment" page. Because Board members are volunteers, addresses and officials change often. Check the Payment page for up-to-date information.

2.5 Roles and Responsibilities

Mentors

Mentors are experienced and knowledgeable persons available to trial hosts to help insure that successful trials are run. This person is typically a very experienced Certifier or member of the Board of Directors who is fully familiar with all aspects of event planning, trial regulations, and PLTA policy. Mentors work closely with the Trial Committee to answer questions and supply guidance.

Working by phone, email, or in person, with a Mentor assigned by the PLTA Board of Directors, a Trial Chairperson may validate a Basic level pack trial without the oversight of a Trial Certifier.

Trial Certifiers

Authorization

Persons authorized as PLTA Certifiers are expected to have a thorough knowledge of pack trial requirements, to be well versed in the history and mission of the PLTA, and to understand PLTA policies as they apply to pack trials and public interface. Requirements to gain authorization are as follows:



Basic and Advance Level Certifier Authorization

The candidate must complete a written test examining knowledge of pack trial standards and requirements at all levels and

- Have overnight llama packing experience
 - Completed at least **two** PLTA sanctioned Advanced pack trials
 - Apprenticed under an authorized PLTA pack trial certifier at one or more Advanced Trials
- OR
- Overnight llama packing experience
 - Completion of at least **one** PLTA sanctioned Advanced pack trial
 - Attended a PLTA Trial Certifier's Workshop

Basic through Elite Level Certifier Authorization

The candidate must complete a written test examining knowledge of pack trial standards and requirements at all levels and have

- Overnight llama packing experience
 - Completed at least **two** PLTA sanctioned Master level pack trials
 - Apprenticed under an approved trial certifier at one additional Advanced or Master level trial
- OR
- Overnight llama packing experience
 - Completed at least **one** PLTA sanctioned Master level pack trial
 - Attended a PLTA Trial Certifier's Workshop

Persons wanting to become Certifiers must begin the process by taking a written test. This is a pass/fail open book test on the contents of the current PLTA Pack Trial Handbook. It is administered by an active authorized Certifier and it must be passed with a score of 90% correct, however, the applicant is allowed to revise answers until they are correct. The point of the test is to ensure that the applicant is thoroughly familiar with pack trial regulations as presented in the Handbook.

Maintaining Authorization

The PLTA board recognizes that pack trial standards and requirements may change over time, and that certifying a trial is a skill that requires knowledge and experience, therefore they have determined that in order to retain authorization certifiers must

- Certify a trial at least **once every three years**.
- Successfully repeat the written exam if they haven't certified a trial in three years.
- Repeat field training if they have been out of action for **longer than five years**.

If an Elite certifier hasn't been active for over three years, they will be offered the option of forgoing field training and downgrading their qualification to Basic/Advanced with successful completion of a written test.

Proof of Authorization

PLTA members who successfully complete requirements to become an authorized certifier are issued a diploma that designates the authorization level they have attained, and the date requirements were completed.

Authority

The Pack Trial Certifier is deputized by the PLTA Board of Directors to settle any disputes that occur during the trial. The Trial Certifier represents the Pack Llama Trial Association at PLTA Trials and serves as the Board of Director's and the Pack Trial Governance Committee's eyes and ears at each trial event. The Certifier is responsible to see that trial activities are conducted in compliance with PLTA standards, procedures and regulations. As such, the Certifier is given the power of censure over the trial activities and participants and must take whatever action s/he deems appropriate to ensure that all aspects of the trial activities are conducted appropriately.

If someone does not follow the rules as set forth by the PLTA Board of Directors, the Trial Certifier must take whatever action s/he deems appropriate ranging from verbal censure to disqualification. Failure of the Certifier to ensure compliance can be grounds for the PLTA to revoke the Pack Trial Certifier's approval.



The Trial Certifier is also tasked with ensuring that the Trial Committee is familiar with the PLTA policy for dealing with accidents that may generate possible insurance claims and that should an accident occur, the circumstances and actions taken are fully documented and handled in accordance with PLTA policy.

Pre-Trial Duties

Inspecting the Course

The Trial Certifier must walk each trial course with the Trial Marshal prior to the start of the trial. During this walk-through, the Certifier will make note of the simulated packing scenario, the objective of each obstacle, and the expected performance of the llamas so that handlers and Stewards can be briefed as to the logic behind the selection of the obstacle and the proper method of negotiating it. The Trial Certifier will also insure that the course has been appropriately designed for the level of the trial and will verify that standards for the following requirements are met:

- Proper length
- Required elevation gain/course distance
- Proper number and types of obstacles
- Reasonable time window.

Modifying the Course

If the terrain prevents the exact physical requirements from being met, or if there are other circumstances that affect the difficulty of the course, the Trial Certifier may approve modification to the course in length, elevation gain, or location. These changes will be made only after all other potential routes have been considered. The Certifier also has the right to lengthen time windows as a means of adjusting to course conditions. Factors that could influence the need to adjust the course may include but are not limited to:

- Extended grades of more than 9%
- Extended sections of extremely rough or rocky terrain
- Extreme weather conditions.
- Dangerous trail traffic

The Trial Certifier is given the responsibility of approving the course design because they are in the best position to evaluate the effects of the demands the course makes on participant llamas. Changes must be made in keeping with the requirements and intent of the established standards for the given pack trial level.

Modifying Obstacles

The Trial Certifier is responsible for assessing the safety of obstacles and their appropriateness to the trial level. If string trials are to be run, obstacles must also be evaluated for the safety and appropriateness for strings. If the Trial Certifier finds an obstacle to be unsafe for a string to negotiate, s/he may require the llamas in the string to be separated so that the llamas navigate the obstacle individually. Alternately, the Trial Certifier may require the selection of a completely different obstacle, or selection of an alternate obstacle to be used only by the llamas working in strings.

Llama Fitness

The Trial Certifier shall determine that all participating llamas are healthy, fit and sound enough to undertake a PLTA pack trial. The Certifier shall not allow any llama to be brought onto the trail grounds if it shows any symptoms of, and/or is known to have been in contact with, any communicable llama disease within the thirty days preceding the first date of the trail.

Equipment Inspection

The Trial Certifier has authority to evaluate and approve or disapprove of the equipment the llama uses during a pack trial. This includes the saddle and pannier system, rigging, load arrangement, and breakaway systems for strings. Decisions are to be made as a matter of safety rather than personal preference.

Pre-Trial Meetings

Before the start of the trials, the Trial Certifier will conduct meetings with participants. These meetings are a critical safety requirement and the Certifier is responsible to see that they are given adequate time and attention to disseminate appropriate safety and administrative information to trial participants. (See Section 3. Event Setup)



Duties during the Trial

The Certifier will actively participate in events during the trial. Duties include:

- Providing assistance to the Trial Committee, Stewards and participants
- Resolving disputes

Post-Trial Responsibilities

After the trial is completed the Trial Certifier will make sure that the Trial Marshal has made provisions for all tags and flagging used to mark the course and obstacles to be removed. The Certifier will also make sure that trial paperwork is properly filled out and appropriately signed. This includes:

- Manageability Score sheets
- Field Test Score sheets
- Trial Certification form
- Trial Results form
- Proof of Completion Forms

The Certifier is required to sign the latter three forms listed above.

The Certifier shall also provide feedback to the Board of Directors by completing a **PLTA Course Critique** and a **written report** that includes descriptions of any difficulties and/or particularly positive occurrences during the trial. This report will be sent to the PLTA Secretary for distribution to the Board of Directors and the Pack Trial Governance Committee. Certifier reports are invaluable tools for improving pack trial safety and administration.

The Certifier will retain a copy of the Certification form and is strongly advised to add a copy of the Trial Results Form and score sheets to her or his files for future reference. The Trial Certifier is **NOT** responsible for submitting paperwork or monies to the PLTA. The Trial Committee is tasked with this job.

Accidents

In the event of an accident the Trial Certifier is called upon by the Board of Directors to be fully supportive to the Trial Committee. While it is the Trial Committee's responsibility to contact the PLTA Board, it is incumbent upon the Certifier to be fully observant of events and record them accurately in a signed and dated written report.

Event Host

The Event Host is the supporting individual, group, organization or other entity who stages the PLTA event. The host is responsible for establishing a Trial Committee or otherwise staffing the roles necessary to successfully support an event and the associated trials. The host is responsible for ensuring that trial results and monies are delivered to the PLTA administration in a timely manner. They are also responsible for safely administering the event and managing accidents as described by PLTA policy.

Trial Committee

To spread out the responsibilities of administering pack trials, any Trial Host may choose to establish a Trial Committee consisting of a Chairperson, Secretary, Trial Marshal and Steward(s). The Trial Committee is then tasked with running the pack trials. Whether or not a committee is established, the various administrative roles must be filled. In many cases hosts will elect to have individuals play multiple roles. This is fully acceptable; however, it must be clear that Stewards are not allowed to lead llamas that are participating in a trial that they are Stewarding.

Trial Chairperson

The Trial Chairperson has overall responsibility for the activities involving pack trails. This person must be very familiar with the current PLTA pack trial regulations and be a current PLTA member. Ultimately the Trial Chairperson is responsible for planning and conducting the trial in compliance with all the general procedures and regulations pertaining to their responsibilities. The Trial Chairperson also serves as the contact person to the PLTA Secretary and Board of Directors. As such, their name, address, and phone number will be provided to the PLTA at the time official application for event sanctioning is made. Should any conduct of an entrant occur during the pack trial event that could or does require disqualification, or should any accident occur during the event, the Trial Chairperson shall submit a complete report to the PLTA.



Trial Secretary

One of the most important roles is that of the Trial Secretary. This position should be held by a detail-oriented person who can organize information clearly and accurately, will not misplace or confuse information, can write legibly and has sufficient computer skills to manage the necessary documentation.

Typically, prior to an event, the Trial Secretary organizes records of who is participating and fills in forms as much as possible in anticipation of their use during trial activities. After the trial, the Trial Secretary shall review all forms for accuracy, legibility, completeness, and signatures. The Secretary manages the trial monies, and reports trial results to the PLTA Secretary.

Trial Marshal

The Trial Marshal is tasked with laying out the course for a trial. This person must be intimately familiar with both the criteria and rationale for designing courses to meet PLTA Standards. The Trial Marshal must also be familiar with Leave No Trace concepts and have a solid understanding of safety issues for the area they are working in. This knowledge is expected to be carefully applied when selecting a Field Test course and obstacles that meet PLTA standards for a particular trial level.

Prior to the event, the Trial Marshal is expected to walk each trial course with the Trial Certifier. During this time the Trial Marshal will explain the logic behind obstacle selection, route, and allowances for elevation gain and distance. The Marshal shall also review with the Certifier precautions and considerations taken to facilitate and expedient handling of emergency situations.

In the event that the Trial Certifier requests changes to obstacles or the course, the Trial Marshal shall insure that those changes are made and reported to the Trial Chairperson.

The Trial Marshal provides course statistics to the Trial Secretary. Often the Trial Marshal fills out the preliminary information on the Trial Certification Form. The Trial Marshal is not responsible for signing any forms required by the PLTA. Once the trial is complete, the Trial Marshal is responsible for ensuring that all trial signage and flagging is removed restoring the landscape to its pretrial condition.

Trial Steward

The Trial Steward's role in a pack trial is to evaluate the performance of each llama as the llama undertakes the tasks required in the trial. Trial Stewards fulfill the role of judge or proctor and in order to do so, must be familiar with what is considered acceptable llama behavior. Stewards will watch for issues of unhealthy or unfit llamas, inappropriate equipment or load, unsafe practices, and any abuse of a llama or intentional interference with another entrant that could require disqualification. These matters will be reported to the Trial Chairperson and the Trial Certifier.

During assessment of Manageability Tasks and Field Tests the Steward shall inform handlers of expected procedure and behavior. During the Field Test, the Steward shall inform handlers of the way obstacles are to be negotiated and help handlers stay on the designated course. The Steward observes each llama as it copes with each obstacle to ensure that they are negotiated appropriately and to determine if any performance deductions need to be made. Stewards will deduct performance points for unsafe and potentially dangerous behavior. The Steward will notify the handler when a performance point is deducted and make note of the circumstances on the Obstacle Score Sheet.

Stewards may not make changes to any obstacle after the Trial Certifier has completed their walk-through except to repair the obstacle to the condition it was when the Trial Certifier had last seen it. If an obstacle is damaged or modified by the entrant's llamas to the extent that it is no longer similar to that seen by the first entrants, the Steward should immediately call for the assistance of the Trial Certifier and await their instruction before allowing other participating llamas to attempt the obstacle. Notes should be taken of the time when this particular trial is temporarily put on hold and the llamas affected by it so their subsequent completion time may be adjusted.

Stewards *are not* responsible for settling disputes. In the case of a conflict the Stewards should immediately contact the Trial Chairperson or Trial Certifier for direction. Mediation by the Steward shall be limited to calming the situation so that the trial may continue.



The Steward is expected to be fit enough to hike at a rate that allows the course to be completed in the allotted time window. Stewards do not have to complete the entire course. They may be “swapped out” so that a single individual only oversees a portion of the Field Test.

2.6 Conflict of Interest

The Board of Directors recognizes conflict of interest issues and wishes to limit them, but because of the small size of the pack llama community and the limited number of Certifiers and volunteers, adequate staff is seldom available to fill all needs. Of particular concern is whether Stewards and Certifiers should be allowed to lead llamas, their own or others, that are being evaluated during a trial. In the case of Certifiers, since the Certifier is not evaluating the llama, and since prohibiting Certifiers from doing so would unduly penalize them and limits the benefits they receive from participating in PLTA events, the Board has determined that they shall be allowed to lead llamas during Field Tests. In the case of Stewards, since they are responsible for evaluating the llama’s performance, the Board has determined that both leading and evaluating puts too great a burden on the Steward. Therefore, the Steward, except in emergency circumstances, is not allowed to lead a llama they are evaluating during Field Tests; however a Steward is allowed to evaluate their own llamas that are being led by someone else.

2.7 Fees

Entry in a pack trial shall be initiated through the presentation of an official PLTA Pack Trial Entry Form for each llama/handler team. The form must be completed in full and the information given on the form must be accurate. Each form must be signed by the owner who is responsible for all errors, or by the owner’s agent duly authorized to make the entry.

Limiting Numbers of Entrants

If required by the land manager, or at the behest of the PLTA trial sponsoring entity, a numerical limit may be imposed on entrants in any and all levels offered at a particular event. If entrants are to be limited, this information must be stated in the advertising information for the event.

Host Fees

Non-PLTA participation fees may vary between events as a function of the activities offered and expenses incurred by the Trial Committee. The fees set by the PLTA and paid to the PLTA are described in this document. All other fees are determined by and are the responsibility of the Trial Host. The PLTA has no input or claim on these fees; they are collected and used at the sole discretion of the trial organizers.

PLTA Fees

Fees are set by the PLTA Board of Directors and are periodically reviewed and revised. This is a volunteer organization that operates on a shoe-string budget. These monies are primarily used to support information management. The Board makes every attempt to keep fees at minimal levels. In recent years PLTA administration has been primarily financed through membership fees. This revenue has proven inadequate to fund needs such as insurance, website support, database support, promotional materials and publishing of PLTA documents. Donations are gratefully accepted. The fee schedule as of March 2026 is as follows:

Fee Schedule

Fee Type	Payment Frequency	Amount
Membership:		
Llama Registration	One-time	\$15.00



Fee Type	Payment Frequency	Amount
Participation:		
Associate (covers insurance only)	Per Day	\$10.00
Individual Member	Annual	\$30.00
Family (2 adults and children under 18 living under the same roof)	Annual	\$45.00
Youth Club (2 adults and 10 children under the age of 18)	Annual	\$50.00
Sanctioning:		
Single Day Event:	Per Day	\$50.00
Unlimited Events within the same year	Annual	\$150.00
Certificates:		
Original copy	Per Certificate	\$0.00
Replacement copy – electronic file (PDF)	Per Certificate	\$5.00
Replacement copy -- hardcopy	Per Certificate	\$25.00

2.8 Participant Requirements

The PLTA Board of Directors acknowledges that as in any situation that has specific requirements and in which participants may feel much is at stake, people may become tense and attitudes strained. The Board therefore recommends that everyone take a deep breath, smile, and remember to enjoy the day.

Llama

PLTA Pack Trials are open to all llamas and guanacos including males, females and geldings or altered animals. The PLTA does not evaluate camelids other than llamas and guanacos in PLTA sanctioned pack trials. All llamas entered in a PLTA sanctioned event participate solely at the risk of their owner, and the PLTA assumes no risk or liability whatsoever.

To participate in an event the llama must be registered with the PLTA and at the time of their participation, their owner must also be a member of the organization. The llama must be at least the minimum age and carry the required weight for a given trial level. Age is calculated on the day of the trial. If the llama’s birth date is the day after the trial, the llama is not eligible to participate until that day.

Fitness

No llama shall be entered or participate in any trial, nor be brought onto the trial grounds, if it shows any symptoms of, and/or is known to have been in contact with, any communicable disease within the thirty (30) days preceding the first date of the trial. No llama that shows obvious signs of being lame or injured or that otherwise is not fit enough to complete the required course shall participate in a trial. The PLTA Trial Certifier will make this determination.

During the trial the llama will be required to maintain a realistic hiking pace as determined by the time windows. (see Section 3.5 Course Design). The average moving speed over the length of a course is expected to be two (2) to two-and-a-half (2.5) miles per hour. If the llama is unable to maintain this pace, or to reach the time windows within the allotted time they will be dismissed from the Field Test and fail the trail.

Preparation

It is unrealistic to expect a llama to come straight off pasture and tackle a PLTA Field Test. Owners are strongly urged to train and condition their llamas both mentally and physically before the trial. Llamas should be trained to negotiate typical trail obstacles expected at the trial level they are entering. They should be experienced carrying the prescribed weight while hiking the required distance and elevation change in varying terrain. Entering a llama or handler in a trial for which they are unprepared compromises the experience of the llama and of other participants.



Besides mental and physical fitness, it is incumbent upon the llama owner to assure that their animal is appropriately prepared for their trial. Things to consider include:

- Tenderness of the foot pad. Llamas from soft pastures may have difficulty with rocky terrain if their feet are not adequately toughened.
- Length of wool. Long wool can contribute to overheating and can cause difficulties when tangling with obstacle components or trailside vegetation.
- Gender challenges. Breeding males may need to be kept separate from females.

It is strongly recommended that owners consult the Pack Trial Committee so that these types of issues may be resolved well in advance of the trial.

Equipment

Llamas entered in the trials shall use equipment described herein. The llama must be led with a lead rope and halter throughout the trial; collars may only be used during the picketing Manageability Task and during rest/lunch breaks. The picketing task also requires the use of a stake-out line attached to something fixed or that pivots around a stake in the ground. This line shall be no shorter than sixteen (16) feet and a maximum of thirty (30) feet long.

All llamas are required to carry pack systems with the packs filled out in a realistic manner typical of normal packing conditions. In the case of participation in Basic trials of llamas that are too young to carry weight the panniers shall be filled out with relatively weightless objects such as empty milk jugs. All saddles must have detachable panniers and at least two cinches securing the saddle to the animal.

Panniers that droop due to lack of filling are not acceptable. Pack systems, i.e. panniers and saddles, must be appropriate to the trial level. Small training pack panniers may be used only in Basic level trials. Saddles and panniers for Advanced level trials must be adequate to haul overnight gear, while Master and Elite trials require the use of heavy-duty gear adequate for a multi-day pack trip. Chest and rump straps are strongly recommended. Chest straps are *required* for string trials.

The saddle and pack must be secured in a safe manner. This will be determined by the Steward and/or Certifier during the required Manageability Task evaluation of each trial and periodically throughout the Field Test.

Llamas participating in String Trials are required to use a chest strap. All connections or tie-ins between llamas will be done with a quick release knot or breakaway system. The Certifier shall evaluate and have the final say as to whether the method of attachment between the llamas is safe and therefore acceptable. Evaluation will include the length of the lead between the animals and the location and manner of attachment. The Certifier is to evaluate based on safety consideration only and not personal preferences.

Load

The load each llama will be required to carry is determined as a factor of the llama's body weight at the time of the trial. To accurately establish an appropriate factor, the llama must be weighed within fifteen (15) days prior to, or at the trail. To facilitate this, the Trial Committee must either make arrangements to have an appropriate animal scale available at the trial or must make available to the llama participants the PLTA Pack Trial Entry Form to be filled out by the llama's owner prior to arrival. The use of llama weight tapes is not allowed. Scales, handheld or otherwise, must be available at the event to determine pannier weights.

In past practice the maximum load of any llama was not to exceed ninety (90) pounds. This limit was established to protect overweight llamas from carrying excessive weight for their stature and ability. However, recent breeding developments are producing large llamas that can appropriately carry a greater load. Therefore, *the ninety-pound limit is no longer appropriate*. Rather, considerations for obese llamas must be made on a case-by-case basis. In general, they should not participate in pack trials. Determinations of whether a llama is adequately fit and can carry the load created by the required weight factor should be reviewed by the Trial Certifier who has the final say. A wise owner will keep their llamas at an appropriate body weight so that there is no question of overloading.

The total load includes the saddle system and panniers plus the pannier's contents. These contents are to be supplied by the participant. The panniers must be adequately stuffed to simulate the typical distention of panniers during a



normal pack trip. Appropriateness of the pack weight and distention will be evaluated by the Steward during the Manageability Tasks with any disputes being resolved by the Trial Certifier.

Pannier contents used to achieve the appropriate load for the llama can include such items as clay, kitty litter or sand. Rocks may be used, but to ensure comfort of the llama, care should be taken when positioning them in the panniers. Water may be used and works best if the containers are properly sized to be filled to the maximum rather than allowing the water to slosh as the llama walks. Solid barbell weights can even be used but have the disadvantage of coming in set weights, needing to be specifically fastened or positioned within the panniers for the comfort of the llama, and cannot be casually discarded on the trail if the llama experiences problems. The use of hay in lighter loads is discouraged since it can carry noxious weed seed and its use is often prohibited by land use managers. Towels and newspaper are often used to fully distend the packs.

Owner

The llama's owner must be a current member of the PLTA at the time of the trial. The owner *is not* required to be present at the trial, nor is the owner required to be the llama's handler during the event. The owner *is* expected to maintain personal records of the llama's trial history. Proof of Trial Completion documents will be awarded to the llama at each trial the animal successfully finishes. These will be accepted by the PLTA as verifiable proof should there be confusion about the llama's accomplishments. Pack Trial Certificates will only be issued upon request. See Section 8.2 for details about acquiring certificates.

Handler

The handler of the llama entered in a PLTA pack trial does not have to be the owner of the llama nor a member of the PLTA. However, if they are not a member, for insurance purposes, they must be a PLTA associate. Additionally for insurance purposes, an Acknowledgement of Risk and Waiver of Liability form must be filled out and signed for all handlers. Handlers under eighteen (18) years of age must have their Event Entry form and waiver of liability signed by the legal guardian or parent with custody and be chaperoned by an adult during the trial.

It is not incumbent upon a handler to hike an entire course. If opportunities exist on the course to do so without delaying or otherwise interfering with the trial, handlers may "swap out" so that only a portion of the course distance is covered by each person. Since the llamas are expected to move at a pace that mimics realistic trail conditions and meet time windows established for the Field Test, the handlers must also be capable of maintaining this pace or risk being dismissed from the course and having their llama fail the trial.

Handlers are expected to be able to capably manage their llama and not cause disruption to other llamas, handlers or trial personnel. Failure to do so will incur assessment of performance/safety deductions and /or dismissal from the pack trial grounds. The handler can also be required to leave the Field Test course if there is intentional interference with the progress of any participant enough to cause them to not complete the trail.

Chaperones

Handlers under eighteen (18) years of age must be accompanied by an adult as a chaperone. This chaperone may also be a participant; however, they must hike within the same group as the youth they are chaperoning in close enough proximity to assist the youth if needed. The chaperone must be either a PLTA member or an associate and must sign an Acknowledgement of Risk and Release of Liability Waiver. Chaperones are expected to meet the same llama handling and hiking skills as a handler.

Non-Trial Participants

All persons present at a PLTA event must sign an Acknowledgement of Risk and Waiver of Liability form. Depending on the number of llamas entered in the trial and possible course restrictions, people not participating in a pack trail may be allowed to take their llamas on the course if the Trail Certifier and the Trial Committee agree to it, however, these llamas will be evaluated by a Steward only if the Trial Committee chooses to provide the necessary support. No records will be kept regarding the evaluation of these llamas' performances. The handlers for these llamas must meet the PLTA's insurance requirements by being either a members or an associate.

At the discretion of the Trial Certifier and the Trial Committee the non-participants may co-mingle with trail participants or be required to travel separately. Non-trial participants must not interfere in any way with the trial



entries. To prevent the possibility of obstacles being accidentally modified before all trial participants can be evaluated, all obstacles should be negotiated by the trial participants before the non-participants. It is recommended that the non-participants follow behind the trial participants and negotiate the obstacles separately.

2.9 Standards of Behavior

Performance Standards

To evaluate the llama, the PLTA has created criteria that allow for individual differences in training techniques but that are appropriate for assessing acceptable behavior and performance. A PLTA pack trial is not a show ring. Llamas do not compete against each other, nor are their performances graded for perfection. Instead, llamas are expected to accomplish what is asked of them, whether it is a Manageability Task, hiking the Field Test course, or negotiating obstacles, in a safe and calm manner while demonstrating a degree of training appropriate to the trial level in which they are entered. The llama's performance on each task or obstacles is evaluated on a pass/fail basis.

Field Tests

As long as the llama negotiates the obstacle in a safe manner, they are judged successful. For example, on an Up/Down/Across obstacle if the llama is 'pulled over' the jump, it counts. If the llama nicks the top of the jump with a foot, it counts. If the llama jumps over the log but lands on the handler, it counts but a performance point is deducted. If the llama jumps over the log in the same way, but the handler is aware and moves out of the way, it counts with no performance deductions.

Llamas are allowed at least three attempts per obstacle. When on the fourth attempt the llama still refuses to move through the obstacle, the llama is disqualified and need not finish the course. Physically forcing a llama to negotiate an obstacle is not acceptable, but Stewards and handlers should be aware that llamas sometimes need time to assess an obstacle before committing to moving through it.

Performance Deductions

Safe and appropriate behavior is paramount when working with animals, including pack llamas. That packing activities often take place in remote locations only heightens the need for caution. The PLTA emphasizes the importance of safety by deducting points for improper behavior during a pack trial.

Performance deductions are made on an overall basis during when undertaking the Manageability Tasks. For example, if a llama spits once or multiple times during the course of completing all Manageability tasks, one point is deducted. However, performance deductions are made on a per obstacle basis during the Field Test. In this case, a llama may spit once or multiple times when negotiating a brush obstacle and lose one point. If the llama then spits once or multiple times when negotiating a mud obstacle it will lose one more point.

Courteous and sportsman-like behavior is expected of all handlers, owners, and other participants. The goal is to achieve an enjoyable social, non-competitive atmosphere. Deductions are made for each unacceptable or potentially dangerous act that is committed by the llama *or its handler*. Deductions can be made for acts observed by the Steward or the Trial Certifier anywhere on the course. Acts generating performance deductions may include, but are not limited to the following:

- Lunging through obstacles
- Running into or intentionally bumping or throwing its body against the handler or another person
- Negotiating an obstacle unsafely
- Kicking or spitting at the handler during saddling, pack attachment, foot inspection
- Kicking or spitting at another llama or person while on the course
- Lying down and refusing to get up again
- Complete refusal to attempt an obstacle
- Trying to pass its handler on the trail or during an obstacle

The Steward will notify the handler whenever a performance point is deducted and mark the deduction on the Obstacle Score Sheet and include a brief explanation of the circumstances. It is advisable for handlers to keep track



of deductions as they are made. A llama will not successfully complete a trial if they incur more deductions than are allowed for the trial they are participating in.

Appendix 2: Guide to Performance Objectives and Point Deductions explains actions that often result in performance deductions during Manageability Tasks, during obstacle negotiation, or on the course. This handout is one of the documents provided to the Trial Committee and is to be provided to the Stewards and handlers prior to the trial. No amount of regulations or descriptions can fully define what is acceptable behavior. This presents a situation that relies on subjective assessment, however, at the core of the evaluation is the concept of safety. Acceptable behavior is synonymous with safe behavior. Once a llama exceeds the allowed deductions for a level, they are disqualified.

PLTA Pack trials are designed to reflect actual packing conditions. Trials can be likened to a real-world pass/fail test rather than a show ring graded exam. When negotiating an obstacle in a pack trial, the llama is being asked the question ‘Can you do this and do it in a safe manner?’ Llamas often have to assess a situation before acting on it. Therefore, at least three attempts are allowed for each obstacle. Attempts beyond that may be assessed by the steward as to whether or not the llama absolutely refuses the obstacle. A llama that refuses to negotiate an obstacle fails the Field Test.

2.10 Grounds for Disqualification

Disqualification usually involves llama behavior, but it can also be a result of handler actions. Any disputes will be resolved by the PLTA Certifier. Disqualification will be required if the llama:

- accumulates more than the allowable performance deductions
- refuses to attempt an obstacle on the fourth try
- cannot meet the time windows
- refuses to continue hiking
- is injured
- attacks or dangerously threatens another llama or person

Disqualification will also be required if the handler:

- is unable to complete the hike and has no one to continue leading their llama
- interferes with another handler or a llama not their own
- cannot control their llama if it becomes unruly
- abuses a llama

SECTION 3. EVENT ADMINISTRATION

3.1 Safety

Understanding that working with animals and hiking in rough country always carries the potential for accidents, the PLTA Board of Directors requires Trial Hosts to carefully consider all safety issues. Location of event facilities, selection of course routes and obstacles and practices of the Trial Committee must all be undertaken with safety in mind.

During a Pack Trial, the Certifier, Trial Host, and Trial Committee personnel adequate to handle a life-threatening emergency, shall remain on site, on the course and/or at the trailhead until all participants have completed and/or cleared their appropriate trial level area.

Safety topics are a critical part of the pre-trial meetings. The Course Certifier should ensure that all points listed below be included in those briefings. The following steps should be followed.

Establishing a Safe Environment



Environments differ with each event but many difficulties may be averted ahead of time by following a few important guidelines. Trial committees should enhance the safe functioning of the event by doing the following.

- Contact local emergency services or law enforcement so they are aware of the event and they may advise you on concerns they might have. Communicate with these officials about safety and the best way to stay in contact.
- Have a veterinarian is on call.
- Post emergency phone numbers.
- Advise participants of environmental dangers that may exist such as extreme weather, water hazards, poisonous plants and dangerous animals.
- Warn participants about trail hazards including such things as crossing a busy roadway, potential slide areas, hunters, dogs, horses, ATVs, bicycles.
- Set up communication check-ins with the Steward on each trial level, whether it is with the use of cell phones, walkie-talkies, or other supplementary form of communication. Make sure every Steward is aware of check-in points.
- Equip each Steward at with a basic medical kit for minor injuries. Make clear where medical kits, either for the group or personal use are located.
- Identify persons on each course who have emergency medical training.
- Identify persons who may have specific medical needs or concerns.

Emergency Planning

The challenge of an emergency can be significantly reduced if it is planned for. The PLTA Board of Directors expects trial committees to take must take their responsibility is this regard seriously by doing the following.

- Clearly identify assigned roles and chain of command in case of an emergency.
- Locate, prepare, and inform participants of extraction routes, in case of an injury. Post maps of extraction routes in prominent locations and inform staff and participants of where they are.
- Ensure that Stewards and Certifiers carry emergency information including maps of area with emergency routes identified and phone numbers of trial organizers, vets and any other people identified to deal with an emergency.
- Ensure that all participants know that the Trial Host must be informed of the time and circumstances of the accident and the nature and extent of injuries. The Steward or any PLTA official present at the time (such as the course Steward or Trial Certifier) should be informed as quickly as possible.

3.2 Pre-trial Meeting

The pretrial meeting(s) are critical to the safe function and efficient administration of a pack trial. They must be conducted in a location and at a time when all participants can fully focus on the issues at hand. The Pack Trial Committee must ensure that adequate time is allotted to address all issues and that all participants participate in appropriate briefings. The Trial Certifier has primary responsibility for conducting the meetings.

It is advisable to conduct two meetings, one with the Stewards and one with the entrants and Trial Committee. These meetings may be combined into a single session if necessary. Because of the dynamic activity that usually precedes a trial, these meetings should be scheduled for a time in advance when participants are calm and receptive to the information being presented.

Review of the Guide to Performance Objectives and Point Deductions (Appendix 2) and the Pre-Trial Briefing for Participants and Handlers (Appendix 3) are a must at these meetings.

Steward's Briefing

The focus of the meeting with the Steward(s) is to brief them regarding their responsibilities during Manageability Tasks and Field Tests and provide clarity regarding the responsibilities of other staff and participants. The Stewards must be instructed as to what is appropriate behavior during the trial and what is, or is not, grounds for making



performance deductions. The Certifier will review the list provided to the Stewards by the Trial Committee that describes typical behaviors requiring deductions.

The Certifier will also instruct the Stewards as to the object of each type of Field Test obstacle and the expected performance of llamas while they negotiate the obstacle and answer any questions the Stewards may have. Also at this time, the Certifier will identify for the Stewards any obstacle for which strings are to be separated so that the llamas can negotiate them individually in a safe manner. An option or alternative format for the Steward's meeting is to conduct a Challenge prior to the trials and use it as a training forum for both Stewards and handlers.

Entrant (and Trial Committee) Meeting

Prior to the start of the trials, the Certifier will gather all entrants and, if possible, the Trial Committee for an explanation of how the trials will be conducted and what to expect. Considering that some entrants may not be experienced llama handlers or may not have previously participated in a trial, the Certifier will address the following:

- the packing scenario
- the purpose of each obstacle
- the expected performance of the llama
- the responsibilities of chaperones
- the location of the first aid kit
- medically trained personnel
- planned procedures in case of emergency
- the presence of poisonous plants along the course
- protocol for encounters with horsemen, dogs and other trail users

3.3 Conflict Resolution

During a pack trial it is the Certifier's responsibility to resolve questions and disputes, however, PLTA members who are not satisfied with the resolution the Certifier approves, have the right to appeal their case to the Pack Trial Governance Committee and/or the PLTA Board of Directors. The final decision on all appeals rests with the Board of Directors. If the Certifier is a party involved in a conflict that cannot be satisfactorily resolved at the time, it is strongly recommended that they contact the Board of Directors for a resolution as soon as possible.

3.4 The Staging Area

The Trial Committee is responsible for acquiring the location(s) where all aspects of the trial are held. There are five basic areas to consider besides the trial course(s)

- Parking area for participant's and staff's trailers and vehicles
- Registration and Check-in area
- Area and facilities to assess trial Manageability Tasks
- Location suitable for pre-trial meetings
- Area near the course trailhead for last minute briefings
- Area for participant camping if event exceeds one day

Ideally all of these areas will be in close proximity. Trials can be held under less-than-ideal conditions. The trial Mentor or any PLTA Board member may be consulted for suggestions.

3.5 Course Design

Leave No Trace

All trial activities shall be conducted in accordance with Leave No Trace ethics and environmental considerations. Flagging and trail markers added by the Trial Marshal to designate trails may be used but must be removed at the end of the trial.



The Trial Marshal shall see that, whenever possible, the trials are conducted on existing trails and only leave such trails to accomplish specific obstacles as necessary. Existing trails include those normally used for hiking, backpacking, pack stock, mountain biking, motorcycles, or other off-road vehicles. This is done to discourage the starting of new trails and to promote good packing ethics.

Basic Concepts

The trial course shall be set up within the prescribed guidelines set forth in this document. The Trial Committee and especially, the Trial Marshal, shall give paramount consideration to the simulation of situations found in a realistic packing environment while allowing for variations in conditions that are peculiar to the terrain in which they are working. It is incumbent upon both the Trail Marshall and the Certifier to select obstacles that can be safely negotiated by the llama.

The Trial Marshal shall set up all courses within the prescribed standards of distance, elevation gain, number and type of obstacles, and specified time window for each particular trial level.

A key aspect of PLTA trials is that the llama is to be tested against a realistic packing environment. To that end the course should be set up within the constraints of the criteria, but simulate in as close a manner as possible, both conditions and obstacles found on a real pack trip. The different levels reflect the progressive degrees of difficulty expected by the serious llama packer on an actual llama pack trip including the level of work effort the llama must expend to successfully handle the distance, elevation gain, and load they carry, within the designated time window.

Course Inspection and Certification

The Trial Certifier shall conduct a pre-trial walk-through with the Trial Marshal to confirm that the course meets PLTA requirements. At this time, and at the discretion of the Trial Certifier, adjustments in obstacles, distance, elevation gain and time window may be made. The Trial Certifier will also indicate any obstacles or other areas on the course where llamas working in a string will be separated and required to negotiate the obstacle individually.

Once the Trial Certifier is satisfied that all requirements have been met, the Trial Certification Form will be inspected for accuracy. When the trial is over the Trial Certifier will further inspect the form for completion, add any pertinent comments and sign the form.

Basic trials in which llamas are participating individually do not require certification by a Trial Certifier. At this level, Trial Chairperson may choose instead, to work closely with a PLTA assigned Mentor. Working with the Mentor by phone, email, or in person, the Trial Chairperson may validate a Basic level pack trial without the oversight or presence of a Trial Certifier.

Mileage and Elevation Requirements

Requirements for mileage and elevation gain are specified under that trial's section in this handbook under section 4.2 Certification Levels. The target requirements of mileage and elevation gain are selected to maintain a sense of continuity with previously sanctioned trials and those of future trials regardless of geographic locations. Deviations from specifications identified in this document must be approved by the Trail Certifier.

Measuring Distance

For each trial level specific distances must be covered and elevation gain accomplished. Mileage distance can be measured with a pedometer, bike odometer, measuring wheel, Global Positioning Satellite (GPS) receiver, or an accurate site or topographical map. Continuing developments in the GPS system and receivers result in considerable variation in readings between different devices. A given device may also deliver different result on different days and under different weather condition. Therefore, when using these devices, it is advised that the Trial Marshal fully understand the limitations and proper use of their unit. It is advisable when using a GPS receiver to measure the course more than once and use an average of the results as the official course distance.

Measuring Elevation

The required elevation gain can be measured with a GPS receiver that has an altimeter, function, an independent altimeter, or a detailed (7.5 minute) topographical map. This elevation gain is cumulative over the entire length of the course. For example, if you climbed up a 50-foot hill (+50) and down the other side (0), then climbed a 100-foot



hill (+100) and down the other side (0), then re-climbed both hills (+50, +100) on your way back, the total elevation gain would be 300 feet. The table below shows the recommended standards for course design. It should be noted that the grade is calculated over the entire distance of the course. It is expected that shorter inclines may be much steeper.

Trial	Recommended		
	Miles	Elevation Gain (ft)	Grade (%)
Basic	3	250 - 500	0.95 - 2.2
Advanced	5	750 - 1000	2.8 - 3.8
Master	8	1500 - 2000	3.5 - 4.7
Elite	10	2500 - 3000	4.75 - 5.7

Elevation/Distance Adjustments

Pack Trial standards were originally designed from the perspective of people packing in the Rocky Mountains and similar terrain. Over the years it has become clear that llamas pack in all sorts of environments and in all kinds of terrain.

A pack llama’s fitness must be adequate for the environment in which they pack. To say that all pack llamas must be able to handle the type of conditions presented by rugged mountainous terrain in order to be considered pack llamas is inappropriate, yet requiring PLTA certified llamas to demonstrate a high level of fitness *is* appropriate. To address this situation, the PLTA Board of Directors has adjusted the distance and elevation requirements so that **mileage can be increased to replace elevation gain by a factor of 250 feet per mile and allowed that this increase may be accumulated in quarter mile increments**. For example, the distances may be increased while the elevation is decreased in the following way:

Trial	Adjusted Requirements (Miles/Elevation Gain)
Basic	3/250, 3.5/125, 4/0
Advanced	5/750, 6/500, 7/250, 8/0
Master	8/1500, 9/1250, 10/1000, 11/750, 12/500, 13/250, 14/0
Elite ¹	10/2500, 11/2250, 12/2000, 13/1750, 14/1500, 15/1250, 16/1000, 17/750, 18/500, 19/250, 20/0

¹Elite courses of less than 8 miles are not allowed because the necessary grade becomes too steep.

Conversely, the elevation gain may be increased while the distance is decreased as shown in the following table. Notice that the percent grade can increase dramatically to the point where it presents unreasonable expectations. *Decreasing mileage while increasing elevation gain should be carefully evaluated against the recommendations listed above.*

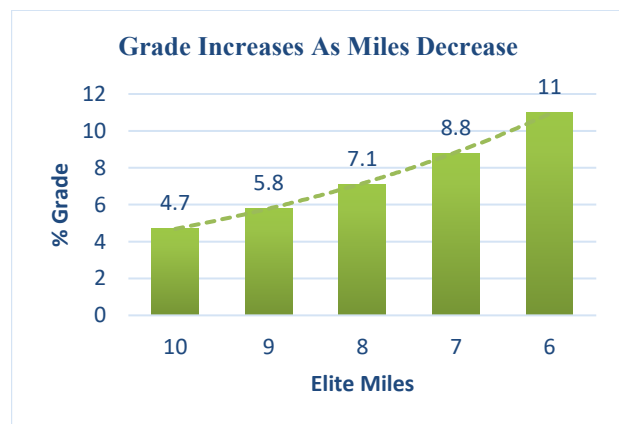
For sake of comparison, the maximum grade allowed on an interstate highway is six percent. Optimum trail construction standards generally fall between five and ten percent. At ten percent construction standards recommend building steps. This is normally allowed for only very short sections of trail. Use of a Field Test course with a **continuous grade of over 8% for a pack trial is strongly discouraged**. A convenient calculator for determining percent grade is available at <http://www.csnetwork.com/inlinedeclinegradecalc.html>.



The Board of Directors instituted the revised requirements on December 16th, 2014. The ratios shown below are for full miles, however, adjustments can be implemented in quarter mile increments, thus the ratios are 250 feet per mile, 188 feet per three-quarters mile, 125 feet per half mile, and 63 feet per quarter mile. In practical application this means that if a Basic trial course is found to have only 100 feet of elevation gain, the missing 150 feet can be compensated for by adding three-quarters of a mile. The total course length then becomes three and three-quarters miles.

Incremental Ratios for Mileage Adjustments	
Miles	Elevation Equivalent (Feet)
1	250
0.75	188
0.5	125
0.25	64

Trial	Adjusted Requirements		
	Miles	Minimum Elevation Gain	Percent Grade
Basic	3	250	1.6
	2	500	4.7
	1	750	12.2
Advanced	5	750	2.8
	4	1000	4.7
	3	1500	9.5
Master	8	1500	3.6
	7	1750	4.7
	6	2000	6.3
	5	2250	8.5
Elite	4	2500	11.8
	10	2500	4.7
	9	2750	5.8
	8	3000	7.1
	7	3250	8.8
	6	3500	11.0



In essence nothing has changed in terms of required exertion or fitness. This adjustment simply makes it possible for llamas living in flat or rolling landscapes to demonstrate their competence as clearly as those who pack in rugged mountains. The Board found this to be a fair and reasonable solution to a problem that has excluded many llamas and their owners from participating in PLTA Pack Trials

A Useful Tool for Calculating Distance/Elevation Gain

Comparing distance and elevation gain is like juggling apples and cantaloupes. It is much easier to just juggle apples. To convert distance and elevation gain to the same kind of units (call these “units of effort”), consider that 1 mile of distance is equal to 250 feet of elevation gain. Therefore, the following holds true:

Trial	Distance Conversion		plus	Elevation Conversion		equals	Total Units of Effort
	Miles	Units		Feet	Units		
Basic	3	3		250 - 500	1 - 2		4 - 5
Advanced	5	5		750 - 1000	3 - 4		8 - 9
Master	8	8		1500 - 2000	6 - 8		14 - 16
Elite	10	10		2500 - 3000	10 - 12		20 - 22



So, if elevation gain for a Master course is 1800 feet, dividing that by 250 yields 7.2 units. Subtracting this from the minimum 14 units required for a Master course leaves at least 6.8 units to be accounted for. Since the ratio of miles to units is one to one, the distance must equal at least 6.8 miles.

Or

If elevation gain for a Master course is 1215 feet, dividing that by 250 yields 4.9 units. Subtract that from the minimum 14 units required for a Master course and you have 9.1. Therefore, the course must be at least 9.1 miles long.

Conversely

If the distance of a Master course measures 10.5 miles, it equals 10.5 units. Subtracting this from the minimum 14 units required for a Master course leaves at least 3.5 units to be accounted for. Since the ratio of elevation gain to units is one to 250, multiplying 3.5 units by 250 yields a necessary elevation gain of at least 875 feet.

In Conclusion

$$\text{Miles} + (\text{Elevation} \div 250) = \text{Units of Effort}$$

Determination of Official Measurements

With the approval of the Trial Certifier, the distance and elevation gain established for a course by the Trial Marshal and Trial Committee shall be used as the official statistics for the course.

Time Window

The time window is the amount of time an appropriately conditioned and trained llama should be able to complete the field test at a pace typical of a pack trip. This window must be established for each trial's field test. A minimum time is set to discourage the trial from becoming a race, while a maximum is set to preclude unwilling or unfit llamas from successfully completing the course.

Throughout the course, a series of checkpoints should be established with a designated time allotment for completion of each section of the course. These checkpoints also provide a known location from which the steward and contact the trial chairperson or other designated person to report the group's location. This is a useful safety measure. If a llama-handler team does not reach the gate within the allotted time it indicates they will likely be unable to finish the course within the time window and they may be required to leave. This allows the rest of the llamas to travel unimpeded by slowpokes and risk their own opportunity to complete the course as required.

Determining the time window and the time allotment for pace is somewhat of an art. The PLTA recognizes that hiking speeds vary, but speeds during a trial should reflect a realistic expectation, keeping in mind the goal of demonstrating the llama's fitness, while preventing the field test from becoming a race. Setting a time window requires that staff understand the expectations for llamas at a given trial level and how that fits with the requirements of a Field Test set up on local terrain and in expected local weather conditions. Considerations include distance, elevation gain or loss, steepness of the climbs, altitude, rough terrain or difficult water crossings, and weather-related factors such as temperature and humidity. This may require experimentation by having llamas practice on the course well before the pack trail to determine what a realistic expectation is. On longer courses adequate time for a lunch break should be built in to the time window or otherwise accommodated.

Obstacle Selection and Complexity

PLTA pack trials are designed to become increasingly challenging at progressively higher levels. To this end, not only do the required distance and elevation-gain increase, but the obstacles also become more difficult. All obstacles must be selected with safety in mind and should reflect realistic trail conditions.

Obstacles are grouped into seven categories. Listed below are their definitions and recommended obstacles that fit each definition. Depending on the location of the trial, there may be other obstacles that fit a category well. Each trial level includes certain required obstacles. If conditions require, the Trial Marshal, with the Certifier's approval, is permitted to select alternates that reflect the same or similar challenge to the llama.

There are two main considerations when selecting an obstacle for a trial; the complexity and the difficulty the llama faces when negotiating it. Complexity is a matter of the number of components the llama is asked to consider at



once. Difficulty refers to the effort the llama must put forth. Each obstacle with its various components poses a single question to the llama “Can you do this?” The llama answers the question with a “yes” or “no” by either negotiating the obstacle or refusing to do so.

Determining Complexity

To understand the challenge an obstacle poses to a llama we look at the situation from a llama’s point of view and ask ourselves, ‘what question does this ask of the llama?’. Llamas will consider the obstacle from the perspective of the

- lateral space (width) available
- vertical space (height) available
- threats to personal space

Obstacles are designed to test the llama’s capacity to answer the question, “can you do this?” at increasing levels of complexity by both the way the question is asked, and by how many of the above issues are incorporated into it. All obstacles at the Basic or Advanced level are limited to asking the llama to confront one question at a time. At the Master level the llama begins to be asked to consider two questions at the same time. At the Elite level three or more questions may be added to a single obstacle occurrence.

For example:

A Basic obstacle asks the llama one question:

Can you move through a tight vertical space by ducking under a low branch?

An Advanced obstacle asks the llama one question but makes the question more difficult:

Can you move through a tight vertical space by ducking under multiple branches?

A Master obstacle asks two questions:

Can you move through a tight vertical space by ducking under multiple branches?

While going down a steep hill?

An Elite obstacle asks two or more questions:

Can you move through a tight vertical space by ducking under multiple branches?

While going down a steep hill?

And while dealing with the difficult footing of rock rubble?

Determining Difficulty

All trial levels include obstacles that ask only one question, however, as noted above, as the trial levels increase, so does the difficulty of single-question obstacles, yet determining the level of difficulty an obstacle poses is somewhat subjective. Maintaining consistent application of PLTA standards is one of the reasons why intense training is required for certifiers. Certifiers and Trail Marshals must also keep in mind that even as the challenge to the llama increases, obstacles must always be selected with safety in mind.

Comparative Example of Obstacle Difficulty

Using an obstacle from Category 3: Up/Down/Across, the following table demonstrates the increasing challenge that can be designed into an obstacle of the same type and category. This example is provided strictly as a comparison, not as a version of any requirement. The llama is being asked to step or jump over a log.

Trial Level	Difficulty
Basic	16” high, 9” diameter log
Advanced	18” high, 12” diameter log
Master	18” high, 20” diameter log
Elite	18” high, 20” diameter log immediately followed by a 16” high, 10” diameter log

The challenge each obstacle presents to the llama increases at each level in three ways: the total number of obstacles, the number of questions the llama has to consider per obstacle, and the difficulty that each obstacle presents.



Trial Level	Number of Obstacles	Questions Asked per Obstacle	Complexity of the Obstacle
Basic	5	One	Easy
Advanced	10	One	Moderate
Master	6	One	Difficult
	8	Two or more	
	(15 total)		
Elite	7	One	Demanding
	13	Two or more	
	(20 total)		

Obstacle Categories

Category 1: Picking One's Way

Question to the llama: Can you negotiate compromised vertical space?

Requirement: The llama must move carefully through material that obscures and complicates footing.

Examples:

- Deadfall
- Logging slash
- Rock rubble
- Dense deep grass

Category 2: Foot Fears

Question to the llama: Can you negotiate this threat to your personal space?

Requirement: The llama must walk through a medium into which the feet sink.

Examples:

- Water
- Mud
- Deep, loose sand, cinder, or gravel
- Soft snow eight to twelve inches deep

Category 3: Up/Down/Across

Question to the llama: Can you negotiate this vertical space?

Requirement: The llama must negotiate an obstacle that requires extending its stride to climb or stretch. The range of height for an upward or downward step or jump is sixteen to twenty-four inches (16" – 24"). No standard has been set for stepping across an obstacle.

Examples:

- High step up
- High step down
- Wide step across
- Jump / step over high obstacle such as a log
- Step down from a higher level such as a rock ledge
- Jump / step over a low obstacle such as a ditch

Category 4: Tight Places

Question to the llama: Can you move through this horizontal space?

Requirement: The llama is required to negotiate a narrow space that allows limited room to maneuver.

Examples:

- Brush
- Duck under
- Weave
- Tunnel
- Back & turn
- Squeeze

Category 5: Steep Slope

Question to the llama: Can you negotiate this vertical space?

Requirement: The llama is required to maneuver up, down, or across a slope of greater than 45 degrees that may cause load shift.

Examples:

- Steep slope up
- Steep slope down
- Steep side-hill with narrow (8 inch) tread



Category 6: Load Management

Question to the llama: Can you tolerate a threat to your personal space?

Requirement: The llama must tolerate adjustments or handling of tack or llama's body, exclusive of head and halter. During this obstacle the llama may be tied to a stationary object or held by another person. In the case of strings, only the lead llama in the string may be restrained unless safety issues caused by an unruly llama requires otherwise.

Examples:

- Top loading (secure an item to, or remove an item from the top of the saddle)
- Accessing panniers (insert an item into, or remove an item from a pannier)
- Putting on a rain cover
- Adjusting cinches
- Bug spray
- Foot inspection

Category 7: Trail Hazards

Question to the llama: Can you tolerate a threat to your personal space?

Requirement: The llama must tolerate unexpected trail conditions or surprising objects.

Examples:

- Dogs, horses, cows, backpacker
- Bicycle, motorbike, ATV, trail runner
- Bridge, gate, puncheon
- Garbage or plastic sheet piled up or flapping

Definitions of Typical Obstacles

Barrier

Obstacles that must be stepped through carefully such as a fallen stone wall, or one that the handler must evaluate and negotiate the llama through safely such as an obstructive fallen tree or branch that could be repositioned to go over, under or past.

Bridges

Any bridge or ramp set above or through an area such as over a stream, or through a swampy, muddy, or rocky area.

Brush

Thick bushes, dense low tree branches, or thick and tall grass or reeds which will rub against the llama's pack system.

Bug Spray

This obstacle mimics the application of applying bug repellent to the llama. Water should be used in this obstacle to prevent possible allergic reactions of llamas to a selected repellent. The handler should be allowed to use either a spray or wipe-on method of application. The body section of the llama to be treated may vary with the trial level.

Deadfall

Debris on the ground, or very low, that the llama and handler must pick their way through, such as downed trees or branches.

Duck Under

Low hanging branches, leaning trees or rock outcroppings, or similar natural obstructions that cause the handler and llama to duck their heads and possibly their bodies in order to pass under.

Foot Inspection

Much debate has gone on as to whether or not this obstacle should be included in the Manageability Tasks. The decision to include it as a field test obstacle reflects the fact that, in practice, the need to inspect a foot often occurs on the trail rather than at the trailhead. The obstacle consists of picking up the llama's foot to inspect for possible injury to the leg, foot or pad. This will be done without the panniers attached to the llama, possibly before the start of the course, during a rest stop, at an obstacle that requires the removal of panniers in order to be safely negotiated, or after the course is completed. The foot to be picked up will be designated prior to the start of the trial by the Trial Committee and/or the Trial Marshal in agreement with the Trial Certifier.



Gates

The handler and the llama must open, pass through, and close a gate.

Jump/Step-Over Obstacles 16 to 24 inches high or wide that must be jumped or stepped over such as a rock, log, small ditch, or other low barrier. All jumps must be controlled

Pack Manipulation

An obstacle that requires the handler to open a pannier and put something in or take something out (or both). This might also include checking cinches, top loading, putting a rain cover on the llama, or a rain slicker on the handler.

Rock Rubble

Scree or small talus-sized rocks that require the llama to pick its way through and over them.

Tight Places

An obstacle (often a grove of small saplings or young evergreens) that presents passageways that are narrower than the main trail requiring the llama to either brush against the sides or to manipulate their body and panniers through a narrow space.

Trail Traffic

The llama is required to pass calmly by hikers with or without dogs, people on horseback, trail bikers, or other trail users.

Water

A water obstacle consists of moving through a body of water that can be moving, such as a creek or shallow river, or still such as the area along the edge of a lake or pond. It can also be wet mud, or a swamp. A llama must be in this obstacle for a minimum of ten feet. Water depth must be no deeper than two feet. It is acceptable to artificially add water to a usually adequate water obstacle.

SECTION 4. TRIAL REQUIREMENTS

Each PLTA pack trial level requires successful completion of multiple variations of a trial. This rule was established as part of the original concept of pack trials for PLTA llamas. It is intended to ensure that the llama is capable of demonstrating the necessary skill to perform at that level in varying circumstances and on multiple occasions. To provide for this at a pack trial event, organizers should consider using different obstacle for each trial or running the course and obstacles in opposite directions to provide a varied experience for the llamas.

Originally llamas were required to complete two Basic trials, four Advanced trials or four Master trials. Elite trials had not yet been established. In deference to member's wishes and recognizing that llamas that had successfully gained certification at a lower level had demonstrated significant skill, the Board of Directors chose to reduce the requirements for llamas already holding certification. Thus, a llama that is certified at the Basic level will achieve certification at the Advanced level when it has successfully completed three rather than four trials. Likewise, llamas that hold an Advanced certificate are only required to successfully complete three trials to earn Master certification.

In recognition of the high level of training and experience of Elite candidates, they are not required to undertake the Management Test. However, they *must* have earned their Master certification before attempting an Elite trial, and they must successfully complete two trials.

No llama at any level is allowed to undertake more than one trial on a given day.

4.1 Requirements for Successful Trial Completion

In order to qualify as having successfully completed a trial, all obstacles set up on the course for that trial must be satisfactorily completed and the Field Test must be completed within the time window. Any of the following disqualifies the llama from successfully completing the trial.

- Failure to complete an obstacle



- Acquiring more than the allowed limit of performance deductions
- Failure to complete the Field Test within the time window

4.2 Certification Levels

There are four levels of PLTA pack llama certification. Each is available for a llama working individually or in a string of two llamas. Thus, a llama could potentially earn eight different certifications. The four levels are Basic, Advanced, Master, and Elite. These are designed to measure increasing packing skill and physical conditioning.

The requirements for each level of certification are designed to provide a consistent progression of difficulty and to accommodate the changes in the way obstacles are selected. Simple obstacles require attention to a single easy item or issue while complex obstacles include dealing with multiple more challenging concerns.

The standards listed in the tables below show the recommended mileage and elevation requirements. In circumstances where these standards cannot be met, distances and elevation gain may be adjusted at the ratio of one mile = 250 feet of elevation gain (see Section 3.5 Course Design) As a result the course for the Field Test portion of a trial may be longer and flatter or steeper and shorter than indicated here.

Basic Pack Trials

The Basic pack trial tests **early stages** of training and conditioning against **minimal packing** requirements. The llama's natural ability and trust in their handler are being evaluated. This level is designed to encourage maximum participation by new and aspiring llama packers and pack llamas. Basic trials are designed to reflect this philosophy as well as being a fun and educational event. A llama certified at the Basic level is beginning to learn to pack. It is expected to be willing to hike short distances with a light load. It is expected to be well-behaved and responsive to its handler, as well as being able to negotiate simple obstacles composed of single components. The certified Basic Pack Llama is a competent day hiker on easy trails.

Basic Pack Trial General Requirements

Five simple obstacles demonstrating the llama's willingness to follow the handler

Criterion	Requirements
Age	At least 2 years old 2 to 2.5 years (30 months) carries no load
Load (percent of body weight)	0 - 10% of fit body weight
Distance	Three miles
Elevation Gain	250 to 500 feet
Total Number of Obstacles Required	Five
Performance Deductions Allowed	Five
Successful Trials Required for Certificate	Two, including one carrying weight

Advanced Pack Trial

Advanced trials are designed to test a llama's ability to deal with a **moderately demanding packing environment**. The requirements are more stringent than at the Basic level. They are based on the expectation that the llama will be moderately fit and be able to negotiate more complex obstacles than at the Basic level. This is reflected in the longer distance, greater elevation gain and more numerous and more challenging obstacles that make up the standard the llama is tested against. A llama certified at the Advanced level is still learning to pack. This llama has attained mental and physical skill adequate to pack moderate distances and negotiate obstacles that are more demanding than a Basic llama would face but are still composed of a single component. A certified Advanced Pack Llama is a competent overnight packer on gentle journeys.

**Advanced Pack Trial General Requirements**

Ten obstacles demonstrating the llama's ability to negotiate typical trail conditions.

Criterion	Requirements
Age	At least 3 years old
Load (percent of body weight)	15% of fit body weight
Distance	Five miles
Elevation Gain	750 to 1000 feet
Total Number of Obstacles Required	Ten
Performance Deductions Allowed	Three
Successful Trials Required for Certificate	Four, or three if the llama has a Basic Certificate

Master Pack Trial

The Master trial tests a pack llama against stringent standards that reflect the demands placed on an **experienced packer**. Training and conditioning a llama to this level is a serious responsibility. The requirements are designed to demonstrate the candidate's superior capabilities. A certified Master Pack Llama is a fully proficient trail packer who is capable of dealing with complicated off-trail situations of short duration. Master packers cooperate closely with their handlers to competently negotiate obstacles composed of multiple components. These are the hardy "bring it on" trail packers.

Master Pack Trial General Requirements

Fifteen complex obstacles requiring skill, agility and responsiveness. All categories must be represented

Criterion	Requirements
Age	At least 4 years old
Load (percent of body weight)	20% of fit body weight
Distance	Eight miles
Elevation Gain	1500 to 2000 feet
Total Number of Obstacles Required	Fifteen
Performance Deductions Allowed	Two
Successful Trials Required for Certificate	Four, or three if the llama has an Advanced Certificate

Elite Pack Trial

The Elite trial tests a llama's packing performance at a stage of training and conditioning that ensures a llama is fit for **long distance travel in extreme terrain**. This llama has earned a special place in the llama community and is dominant in the field of packing. This trial is a level above Master and in order to participate, a llama must already have earned a Master Pack Llama certificate. The most significant difference between the Master and Elite levels is the higher degree of fitness, both mental and physical, the Elite llama demonstrates. The certified Elite Pack Llama works in partnership with its handler to adjust to very complex or unfamiliar obstacles and think through how to negotiate them without detailed cues, while remaining responsive to the handler's communications. The Elite packer is mentally and physically fit for work in extreme terrain under demanding conditions. These llamas are the "go anywhere, do anything" superstars of the llama packing world. Certification as an Elite Pack Llama (EPL) is the PLTA's highest level of recognition of pack llama achievement.

Elite Pack Trial General Requirements

Twenty obstacles demonstrating the llama's skill at thinking through a complex situation and negotiating it successfully.

Criterion	Requirements
Age	At least 5 years old
Load (percent of body weight)	25% of body weight
Distance	Ten miles
Elevation Gain	2500 to 3000 feet



Criterion	Requirements
Total Number of Obstacles Required	Twenty
Performance Deductions Allowed	Two
Successful Trials Required for Certificate	Two, Llama must already have a Master Certificate

String Pack Trials

All PLTA String Pack Trials require a PLTA Certifier to be present at the time of the trial. String trials test the packing scenario of a single handler leading multiple pack llamas in single file on the trail with each animal connected to the one in front of it. Llamas participating in this test are expected to have been trained and experienced in the activity. Trials consist of the same courses as for individual llamas with the corresponding weight requirements, obstacles and time windows and may be conducted concurrently with trials in which the llamas participate individually.

In a String Trial the llamas are required to work in teams of two and, with the exception of obstacles that require pannier removal, remain in the string while negotiating obstacles, although the Trial Certifier may determine possible obstacles, where the llamas may be separated for safety reasons. This determination is made prior to the trial. Preferably an alternate obstacle will be located.

Llamas may participate in string trials lower than the individual trial for which they are certified. For example, a llama that has earned an individual Advanced Pack Llama (APL) certification may undertake certification as a Basic String Pack Llama (BSPL) even if they have not earned a Basic individual certificate (BPL).

Performance deductions are accrued independently by each llama. The allowed performance deductions are the same as for an individual trial. In other words, if the total deductions for one llama exceed the deductions allowed for the trial only that llama is disqualified.

Two successful completions of the same level of String Trial are required for certification at a given level. Llamas are not required to complete their string trials while working in the same team. Thus, if llama A and llama B successfully complete a String Trial as a team, and llama B and llama C successfully complete a String Trial at the same level, llama B will have successfully earned String Certification. Llamas A and C will have both earned one of the two completions required for certification.

String Level Requirements

Numbers and types of obstacles appropriate to the trial level

Trial Component	Requirement
General Requirements	The same as for the level attempted
Llamas per String	Two
Obstacle Negotiation	Done while in string
Performance Deductions Allowed	Applied to the individual llama.
Successful Trials Required	Two for each llama

The PLTA recognizes that many people string their llamas of groups of more than two llamas thus creating three different skills needed by the llamas involved: lead, middle, and tail llama. The middle llama has to contend with having other llamas both in front and behind which creates greater challenges. As of 2026 the Board of Directors has chosen to retain the option of requiring more llamas in the string, or creating a separate certification for longer strings, for future consideration.

4.3 Manageability Tasks

Manageability Tasks and the Field test are considered two separate components of examining the llama’s fitness as a dependable pack llama. Llamas participating in Elite trials are not required to perform Manageability tasks, all other llamas are required to complete Manageability Tasks as part of *each* trial.



Purpose

Manageability Tasks are an elemental requirement for a pack llama. These tasks are typically encountered at the camp or trailhead rather than on the trail, therefore, examination of the llama’s ability to complete them is done separately from the Field Test. Equipment required for the tasks include a trailer for the llama to load into, and possibly a pen in which to do the haltering task, although the confines of a trailer may be used for this. This equipment is to be provided by the Trial Committee.

Procedure

Five (5) tasks are evaluated for llamas participating individually. These are:

- Haltering
- Loading and unloading
- Pack Attachment
- Picketing
- Saddling

Because a llama is required to have earned individual certification at any given level prior to undertaking string certification, only three (3) tasks are required for llamas participating in strings. These are:

- Saddling
- Pack Attachment
- String tie-in

At most trials the Manageability Tasks are evaluated prior to undertaking the Field Test, although this is not required. These evaluations may be conducted at the staging area or even in camp the night before the trial. Manageability Tasks will be evaluated by a Steward or a Trial Certifier. It must be remembered that the standards for success are different from what is expected in a show arena. What is being evaluated is the behavior expected in a realistic packing environment. During Manageability Tasks the llama is expected to remain calm, behave in a safe manner, and be cooperative. They are not expected to behave in a precise or stylized manner.

Llamas surpassing the limit of allowable performance deductions for their trial level during Manageability Tasks are disqualified and need not complete the Field Test portion of the trial.

Tasks

Haltering

The halter is removed from the llama while confined in a small pen or trailer. The animal is allowed to be completely free within the confines of the enclosure; often the handler is asked to away from the llama and move to the opposite end of the enclosure so the llama recognizes it is loose. After a short time, or when it is obvious that the llama realizes it is free, the handler is asked to put the halter back on. The interaction between the llama and handler is evaluated for calmness. During halter removal and re-haltering, the llama is expected to remain calm, allow approach without becoming anxious and accept the halter without becoming unruly.

Picketing

The llama is tied by a line to something fixed or that pivots around a stake in the ground for a minimum of five minutes. The line shall be between sixteen (16) and thirty (30) feet long. The llama must remain calm even if they become entangled in the line. If the llama becomes 'hog-tied' where the rope encircles the llama's feet so it can't move, or becomes tangled and panics, performance deductions are made. If the event is held at a location where llamas participating in trials have been staked out for long periods with no problems occurring, the picketing Manageability Task requirement can be waived.

Loading/Unloading

The llama shall be loaded and unloaded from a trailer or vehicle. While loading and unloading the llama should willingly enter and exit the trailer or vehicle. Performance/safety deductions are made if it balks, refuses, or leaps out of or into the trailer in an unsafe manner.

Saddling

The llama must be saddled properly. The llama should stand calmly while the handler attaches all parts of the saddle system except for the panniers or packs. The handler may have assistance with this task.

Pack Attachment

The panniers must be attached to the saddled llama properly while the llama stands calmly. The handler may have assistance with this task.



String Tie-in

In String Trials, tie-in is the act of connecting the lead and trailing llamas to each other in a string formation. The initial position of each llama is at the discretion of the handler. A chest strap must be worn by the lead llama. All connections or tie-ins between llamas must be done with a quick release knot or breakaway system. The certifier has the final say as to whether or not the method of attachment is safe and acceptable. Tie-in is required for String Trials only.

4.4 Field Test

Purpose

The Field Test represents a test of the core of a packing experience. The tasks involved, negotiating obstacles and completing a course, test the llama's performance in a natural packing environment. The llama is required to demonstrate both its fitness level and its packing skill. This is not a test of handler's fitness or skill.

Procedure

Two methods of administering a pack trial are available, roving steward or certifier escort.

Hiking Requirements

PLTA pack trials are tests for the llama, not for the handler, or the steward, or the certifier. None of these people is required to hike the entire course. All persons are allowed to swap out with other individuals to complete the task. The only requirement is that llamas are always accompanied by an appropriate handler, and candidates are always in the company of either a steward or certifier.

Roving Steward

The roving steward method is most commonly used and is strongly recommended. In this method, groups of llamas and their handlers walk a marked course with obstacles that are clearly identified. They are accompanied by stewards who hike with them overseeing the test and watching for appropriate behavior. When the group reaches an obstacle, the steward explains how it is to be negotiated. The llamas are then led one at a time through the obstacle while the steward evaluates and scores them. When all the llamas have finished, the group moves on as a unit. A group of five or so llamas and their handlers is optimum. Stewards can be switched out so that it is not incumbent on a single steward to hike the entire course. Because the course and obstacles for the field test are designed by the trial marshal and certified by the trial certifier, the steward bears no responsibility for determining the route or identifying obstacles. That is all done ahead of time.

Certifier Escort

In a certifier escort scenario all elevation, distance, and obstacle requirements as well as other pack trial rules and procedures remain unchanged from current standards. In practice, if the event has multiple trials going on at the same time, the certifier will have to be available by phone or other means to deal with any administrative or emergency issues. The best practice is to have a second certifier available to handle those matters.

The hallmark of the certifier escort method consists of two major changes compared to the roving steward method:

- Marking the exact route of the course prior to the trial is not necessary.
- Obstacles are not required to be identified or marked prior to the trial.

In order to facilitate this, the certifier must be familiar with the terrain, general area, potential routes, and available obstacles. In the best-case scenario, a general route would have been identified and mapped prior to the trial and a pre-trial walk through by the certifier would have taken place. This allows the certifier to be cognizant of potential obstacles and a route to that meets required distance and elevation gain.

Specific requirements are as follows:

- The method **applies only to the Elite, Master and Advanced level trials**. It is not to be used for the Basic Trials.
- Mileage, elevation gain and obstacles requirements remain the same as with other methods of administration.
- The certifier keeps a record of the route and obstacles used during the field test.
 - (GPS receivers and cameras are excellent documentary tools.)



- The certifier assumes the steward’s function of observing, evaluating, and recording llamas’ performance.
- The certifier determines that all obstacle requirements for the designated level are met and certifies course length and elevation gain.
- A special set of forms is used to allow the certifier to record field test information.
- If a steward is available to guide the group, the accompanying certifier may lead their own llama through the course and have its performance evaluated and scored. In this case, caution against conflict of interest must be carefully observed.

Basic trials are excluded from the certifier escort method because the Board has determined that handlers and llamas at that level benefit from a more structured situation. The Board wants to provide both handlers and stewards with the opportunity to learn the regular structure of trials. It is also the case that certifiers are not required to be present for Basic trials and bringing one in poses an unnecessary burden on organizers.

For people at the Basic level, Challenges provide a better opportunity for a more free-form way of dealing with hiking and obstacles. In a Challenge, handlers are able to choose the obstacles their llamas attempt and kibitz about how to negotiate and train for them. They also can attempt an obstacle multiple times to, in effect, train on the spot since the Challenge is designed as a free-form, fun event, rather than an examination of the llama’s ability.

Background

On 9/12/19 the PLTA Board of Directors made changes to the procedures for field tests. Up until that time two methods of administering the test were available: the stationary steward and the roving steward. In the stationary method, stewards were posted at each obstacle while the handlers and llamas hiked the course on their own. Stewards stayed at their assigned obstacles and scored llamas as they passed through. This method may work well when there are many llamas to be tested on a short course. On longer courses it requires a large staff (20 people for 20 obstacles on the Elite) which was rarely available. It also has the disadvantage that, except for time spent at an obstacle, the llamas are not under the scrutiny of a Steward. Misbehavior can go unobserved, support may not be close by in the event of an emergency, and participants can get lost on the course. The method was seldom used. The board dropped the stationary steward option while retaining the roving steward and adding the certifier escort method.

Obstacles

Each trial level has specific obstacle requirements that must be addressed on the course.

Basic Pack Trial Obstacle Requirements: 5 Obstacles

Category	Required Obstacle
1 Picking One's Way	any obstacle from category
2 Foot Fear	any obstacle from category
3 Up/Down/Across:	any obstacle from category
4 Tight Places	any obstacle from category
Any Category:	any obstacle appropriate to trial level

Advanced Pack Trial Obstacle Requirements: 10 Obstacles

Category	Required Obstacle
1 Picking One's Way	Deadfall
1 Picking One's Way	Rubble
2 Foot Fear	water (if possible)
3 Up/Down/Across:	any obstacle from category
4 Tight Places	any obstacle from category
5 Slippery Slope	any obstacle from category
6 Load Management	any obstacle from category
Category a*	any obstacle from category
Category b*	any obstacle from category
Category c*	any obstacle from category
* Obstacles are chosen by the Trial Marshal from three different categories	



Master Pack Trial Obstacle Requirements 15 Obstacles

Category	Required Obstacle
1 Picking One's Way	deadfall
1 Picking One's Way	rubble
2 Foot Fear	water (if possible)
3 Up/Over/Across:	any obstacle from category
4 Tight Places	brush
5 Slippery Slope	any obstacle from category
6 Load Management	panniers off and foot inspection
Eight obstacles created from two components	Any obstacles appropriate to the trial level

Elite Pack Trial Obstacle Requirements 20 Obstacles

Category	Required Obstacle
Seven (7) obstacles composed of a single component	Any obstacle appropriate to the trial level
Thirteen (13) obstacles, each created from two or more components from different categories.	Any obstacles appropriate to the trial level

SECTION 5. INSURANCE

The PLTA does not require Trial Hosts to supply liability insurance. Instead, PLTA maintains a general liability policy. Some land use managers require a Certificate of Insurance and possibly proof that their group be listed on an “also insured named” form. This latter requirement may incur a small additional fee. If a copy of a Certificate of Insurance or any other proof of insurance is required, the Trial Host must contact the PLTA as soon as possible and no later than two (2) weeks prior to the event, since these documents take time to process.

The current insurer of the PLTA requires that all PLTA event participants, including committee members, sign the “Acknowledgement of Risk and Waiver of Liability” form. All participants must be members or associate members of the PLTA. For all non-owner handlers of llamas entered in a trial that are *not* PLTA members the PLTA specifically created the Associate membership to fulfill this insurance requirement.

All llamas are entered in any PLTA sanctioned event solely at the risk of the owner, and the PLTA assumes no risk or liability whatsoever for them.

The PLTA has established a protocol for dealing with accidents that may result in insurance claims. This protocol will be made available to all Trial Hosts. They are expected to likewise make it available to the Trial Committee. In addition, during a pack trial, a PLTA board member will be made available by phone to assist as necessary with insurance needs.

SECTION 6. ACCIDENT MANAGEMENT

The PLTA Board of Directors has created a document titled ‘Safety First! But What If PLTA Insurance Is Needed?’ that describes procedures to be followed in case of emergency. This document should be thoroughly reviewed by all event staff. A copy of the document should be in the possession of the Trial Chairperson, Trial Secretary, Trial Stewards, and Trial Certifier during the event.

Prior to the trial the Trial Host will be supplied with the name and contact information of a Board member who will be available by phone during the trail and who will provide support in case of an accident. This person will be responsible for contacting the insurance company. Typically, this will be the PLTA Secretary.



If an accident occurs during the event, the Trial Host will immediately contact the PLTA Board of Directors and explain the situation so that the Board may contact the insurance company. The Certifier, Steward and, to the extent possible, other individuals involved will each supply a detailed written report that thoroughly explains what happened. The process for reporting what happened is as follows:

6.1 Document the Accident

Step 1. Document, Document, Document,

- Take pictures of the injury, of the people involved, of the llama involved and of the site.
- Write a description of what happened, sign it and date it. Include:
 - Information about the individuals involved, including llamas.
 - Full name
 - PLTA number
 - Contact information
 - Details about how the incident occurred; who, what, when, where, and why.
 - Details about how the incident was managed
 - Images of the site, of injuries, of rescue activities, and anything else that might be pertinent.
- Have the injured party provide a signed and dated description of what happened.
- Have the Trial Certifier and the Steward provide signed and dated descriptions of their experiences.

6.2 Report the Accident

Step 2. Contact the PLTA Board of Directors.

Chain of command is extremely important during an emotionally packed incident. Without clear direction as to who is responsible for what, confusion can develop very quickly. To prevent this, the PLTA Board of Directors has determined that one person has the responsibility for contacting the Board of Directors; this is the Event Host. The order of precedence for contacting a PLTA officer is as follows:

- PLTA Secretary
- PLTA Treasurer
- PLTA President

Contact information for each of these people is available on the PLTA website at packllama.org. The PLTA officer is responsible for contacting the insurance company. It is important that trial participants do not attempt to contact the insurance people themselves.

SECTION 7. INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

7.1 Reporting Results

Time Frame for Delivering Results

Results are to be compiled and delivered to the PLTA Secretary within six (6) weeks of the event. It is unfair to participants who may be looking forward to their certificates for Event Hosts to shun this responsibility. If no certificates are to be awarded, paperwork for the event must still be sent within the six-week time period. If the paperwork is not sent within the six-week period, an email notification will be posted to all PLTA members to the effect that the paperwork has not been received by the PLTA office and they are at risk of losing credit for their llamas' accomplishments.

The PLTA Board can only ask for Event Hosts to professionally and responsibly return this paperwork. If a person responsible to report such paperwork becomes a chronic 'no-show', it may be in the best interests of PLTA membership that this person is not allowed to hold future PLTA events.



Responsibility for Proof of Completion

The Board of Directors has spent many hours trying to verify claims of llama owners for which documentation is unclear or cannot be found. As a result, it has become necessary to put the responsibility of supporting claims of accomplishment on the shoulders of the owner. Doing so also protects the owner from potential faulty reporting by the Trial Committee, and from lost records by the PLTA. It also removes the burden of proof and the need for many wasted hours by the Board of Directors hunting for non-existent records.

Furthermore, the owner of any llama participating in a trial is solely responsible for retaining proof of their llama’s participation. This shall take the form of a Proof of Completion document. Without this proof (in hard-copy) of successfully completing a trial, no credit can be given to any llama or llama owner. Although careful records are kept by the PLTA Board of Directors, it must remain the responsibility of the owner to provide proof of completion of trials.

The PLTA supplies a form for this purpose, yet it suggests that Pack Trial Committees may wish to design their own forms as both an official document and as frame-able memorabilia for the event. Any such form must include the following information:

- The phrase “officially Sanctioned PLTA Pack Trial Proof of Completion”
- The full registered name of the llama
- The phrase “has completed the required manageability tasks, distance, elevation gain and obstacles”
- The name of the level completed
- The number of trials necessary to complete a certification level
- The name and date of the pack trial event
- Signature of the Trial Chairperson and the Trial Certifier

7.2 Summary of Responsibility for Forms

The Following table lists all the forms that are required for a PLTA pack trail. The Trial Results form is the first form a chairperson or secretary should work with. Filling out llama information on it as entries come in greatly facilitates record management.

One Form Required per	Form	Responsible Person	Signatures Required	Recipient
Event	Event Sanctioning	Trial Secretary	PLTA Secretary	Chairperson
Event	Financial Report	Trial Secretary	Trial Secretary	PLTA
Event	Trial Critique	Participant	None	Chairperson
Event	Trial Critique & Report	Certifier	Certifier	PLTA
New Member	Membership	Participant	Participant	PLTA
Participant	Liability Waiver	Trial Secretary	Participant	PLTA
Owner	Certificate Request	Owner	Owner	PLTA
New Llama	& Llama Registration	Participant	Participant	PLTA
Llama	Trial Entry	Participant	Owner	PLTA
Llama per Trial	Proof of Completion	Chairperson	Chairperson & Certifier	Participant
Trial	Field Test (Obstacle) Score Sheet	Trial Secretary	Steward	PLTA
Trial	Manageability Score Sheet	Trial Secretary	Steward	PLTA
Trial	Trial Results	Trial Secretary	None	PLTA
Trial Day	Trial Certification	Trial Secretary	Certifier	PLTA



Forms listed in order of usage.

When Used	One Form Required per	Form	Responsible Person	Signatures Required
Pre-Trial	Event	Event Sanctioning	Trial Secretary	PLTA Secretary
	Participant	Liability Waiver	Trial Secretary	Participant
	New Member	Membership Registration	Participant	Participant
	New Llama	Llama Registration	Participant	Participant
	Llama	Trial Entry	Participant	Owner
Trial	Trial	Manageability Score Sheet	Trial Secretary	Steward
	Trial	Field Test (Obstacle) Score Sheet	Trial Secretary	Steward
	Llama per Trial	Proof of Completion	Chairperson	Chairperson & Certifier
	Event	Trial Critique	Participant	None
Post Trial	Trial Day	Trial Certification	Trial Secretary	Certifier
	Trial	Trial Results	Trial Secretary	None
	Event	Financial Report	Trial Secretary	Trial Secretary
	Event	Trial Critique & Report	Certifier	Certifier
	Llama	Certificate Request	Owner	Owner

7.3 Forms Description and Usage

Event Sanctioning Form

This form is used to request sanctioning by the PLTA for an event held by an individual, group or other entity. Filing this form puts in motion review/approval of the request by the PLTA Board of Directors. It also begins the process of providing a mentor for the host, posting the event on the PLTA website and informing the insurance carrier.

Trial Entry Form

This form is used to enter a llama in a pack trial. It requires completion of both the llama and the member's PLTA number. Acquiring a number takes time. It is strongly recommended that this be done in advance of the event. However the form can be completed prior to the event or filled out on location. For convenience, it includes a section for enrolling people or registering llamas with the PLTA.

Acknowledgment of Risk and Waiver of Liability

To ensure insurance coverage, this form must be filled out by **all persons attending PLTA events** whether they are involved in the activities or not.

Manageability Score Sheet

The Manageability Score Sheet is used to record the evaluation of a llama's performance of the Manageability Tasks at a trial. The evaluation may be made by a Steward or the Trial Certifier. In any case, the evaluator must completely, legibly and accurately fill out this form. It must then be signed, dated, and presented to the Trial Secretary.

Obstacle (Field Test) Score Sheet

The Obstacle Score Sheet is used by the Steward to score their evaluation of a llama's behavior when negotiating Field Test obstacles and while on the course. The form includes the list of obstacles the llamas will encounter and is typically prepared before the trial begins. Stewards are required to record any performance deductions and their



cause, and whether a llama successfully completes the obstacles and finishes the course. The Steward must completely, legibly and accurate fill out this form. It must then be signed, dated, and presented to the Trial Secretary.

Trial Certification Form

This form documents the course statistics as well as how long participants took to complete the course. Typically, the Trial Secretary fills out the preliminary information while the Trial Certifier uses the form to record any anomalies in course requirements or changes they may have made to obstacles, elevation gain, time windows or distance. The Trial Certifier is responsible for completing, signing, and presenting the form to the Trial Secretary.

Trial Critique Form

This form should be made available to all participants who may fill it out at their discretion. Only the Trial Certifier is required to fill it out. The Certifier must include a completed copy with their report to the PLTA Board of Directors.

Trial Results Form

This form summarizes the information about all of the llamas who participated in the event. It is a critical piece of information that must accurately reflect the trial results and information on all other forms. It is to be filled out by the Trial Chairperson, or their delegate, and signed and dated by the Trial Certifier.

Proof of Completion Document

These documents are presented to the owner of, or person responsible for, each llama that successfully completes a trial. It is used as tangible proof of the llama’s participation. The form is signed by the Trial Chairperson and Trial Certifier. Recipients should be advised to retain this form for their records.

Financial Report

The financial report provides a concise record of payments made and monies appropriated to the PLTA. It is particularly useful in helping the PLTA treasurer ensure financial records are correct. This document is signed by the Trial Secretary and included with materials sent to the PLTA staff when the Event has been completed.

SECTION 8. RECOGNITION OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The total number of trial completions required for award of certificates and titles is established by the PLTA Board of Directors. While any individual or organization is welcome and encouraged to conduct trials and to test pack llamas against a standard, including the PLTA standard, only the results from trials that have been sanctioned by the PLTA will be included in the PLTA database and considered in conferring PLTA Certificates and their associated titles. PLTA assumes no liability whatsoever concerning any of its services, certificates, or titles.

8.1 Titles

When trial results have been compiled, each qualifying llama will have earned the right to display titles and credentials appropriate to its level of achievement. This information will be publicly posted on the PLTA website and retained in PLTA records.

PLTA Pack Llama Titles

Individual Title	Credential
Basic Pack Llama	BPL
Advanced Pack Llama	APL
Master Pack Llama	MPL

String Title	Credential
Basic String Pack Llama	BSPL
Advanced String Pack Llama	ASPL
Master String Pack Llama	MSPL



Individual Title	Credential
Elite Pack Llama	EPL

String Title	Credential
Elite String Pack Llama	ESPL

8.2 Record Keeping

The PLTA maintains a database that tracks llama statistics and records of its accomplishments, records of events, and membership account information. Once an event is concluded, paperwork is sent to the database manager who records it in the database. The database is considered *the* official PLTA record. Unless demonstrated otherwise through official hardcopy records, the PLTA considers the database the accurate repository of llamas records. The axiom “garbage in – garbage out” applies here. Accurate information can be added to the database only if accurate information is received. Therefore, **it is critical that all forms are complete and legible.** Correction of errors and settlements of disputes require hardcopy proof making retention of trial forms, especially the Manageability Score Sheet and Field Test Score Sheet and event chairs especially important. Proof of Completion documents retained by owners are critical to demonstrating their llama accomplishments. Members are encouraged to retain the following records for themselves and their llamas:

- Their personal PLTA number
- Their membership dues payments
- Their llama’s PLTA number
- All pack trials completed, successfully or otherwise
- Proof of Completion documents
- Levels of certification their llama has achieved
- Challenge points their llama has accumulated
- Mileage records compiled as part of Mileage Club participation
- Certificates issued by the PLTA for their llama

8.3 Pack Trial Certificates

Following the successful completion of the final trial necessary for certification, and upon receipt of the trial results by the PLTA Secretary and an image of the llama from its owner, the PLTA will issue an official certificate. This certificate displays the level accomplished and pertinent information in an attractive layout suitable for framing. The PLTA is in the process of coordinating with the ILR to include the llama’s PLTA credentials on their pedigree.

How to Acquire a Replacement Certificate for Your Llama

The issuance of a Pack Trial Certificate requires application by the llama’s owner or the owner’s delegate. This application shall be made using a form provided by the PLTA. The form includes the following information:

- The owner’s PLTA number
- The name and address of the person to whom the certificate shall be mailed
- The registered name of the llama
- The name the llama is typically called by, if different from the registered name
- The llama’s birth date, PLTA number and, if applicable, ILR number
- Dates and location of qualifying trials
- An image of the llama taken in accordance with PLTA recommendations
- A five-dollar (\$5) fee is charged for replacement of certificates in an electronic format (PDF). Twenty-five dollars (\$25) is charged for a hardcopy replacement. These fees help defray handling, cost of materials, and postage.
-

8.4 Awards

When a llama has successfully completed the final trial necessary for certification they will receive a certificate and an award appropriate to the level achieved.





SECTION 9: APPENDIXES

Appendix 1. PLTA Pack Trial Requirements Reference Sheet

General Requirements

	Basic	Advanced	Master	Elite
Number of Trials	2	3 – 4	3 – 4	2
Minimum age	2 years	3 years	4 years	5 years
Allowable Deductions	5	3	2	2
Total # Obstacles	5	10	15	20
Miles ¹	3	5	8	10
Elevation Gain	250 – 500	750 - 1000	1500 – 2000	2500 - 3000
Units of Effort ²	4 – 5	8 – 9	14 – 16	20 – 22

¹Distance may be substituted for elevation gain at a rate of 1 mile per 250 feet.

²See PLTA Pack Trial Handbook, Section 3.1: A Useful Tool for Calculating Distance/Elevation Gain

Field Test Obstacle Requirements

Basic		Advanced		Master		Elite	
Category	Obstacle	Category	Obstacle	Category	Obstacle	Category	Obstacles
1	any	1	Deadfall	1	Deadfall	Preferably all categories represented	7 obstacles
2	any	1	Rubble	1	Rubble		
3	any	2	Water if possible	2	Water if possible		
4	any	3	any	3	Any	Single Category	
any	any	4	any	4	Brush		
		5	any	5	Any	Combinations from 2 or more categories.	
		choice a	any	6	foot inspection		
		choice b	any	Combinations from 2 or more	8 obstacles		
		choice c	Any				

Field Test Obstacle Categories

Category	Definition	Examples
1. Picking One’s Way	Move through material that obscures and complicates footing	Deadfall, slash, rock rubble, dense deep grass
2. Foot Fear	Walk through a medium into which the feet sink.	Water, mud, deep loose sand, cinder or gravel, soft snow 8” – 12” deep
3. Up/Down/Across	Extend stride to climb or stretch (16” – 24” up or down, no specs for across)	High step up, low step down, log, ditch
4. Tight Places	A space that allows limited room to maneuver	Brush, tunnel, duck under, weave, back & turn, squeeze
5. Slippery Slope	A slope of greater than 45 degrees that has loose footing and which may cause load shift	Steep slope up, steep slope down, across steep slope with narrow (8”) tread
6. Load Management	Handling of tack or llama’s body, exclusive of head and halter	Top-loading, accessing pannier, cinch adjustment, bug spray, foot inspection, rain cover
7. Trail Hazard	Unexpected trail conditions	Structures, debris, livestock, people, pets, machines



Manageability Test Requirements	
Individual Llamas	String Llamas
Haltering	Saddling
Load & Unload	Pannier Attachment
Picketing (5 min. on 16' lead)	String tie-in
Saddling	
Pannier Attachment	

Load Requirements

Weight	Basic ¹	Advanced	Master	Elite
	10%	15%	20%	25%
250	25.0	37.5	50.0	62.5
260	26.0	39.0	52.0	65.0
270	27.0	40.5	54.0	67.5
280	28.0	42.0	56.0	70.0
290	29.0	43.5	58.0	72.5
300	30.0	45.0	60.0	75.0
310	31.0	46.5	62.0	77.5
320	32.0	48.0	64.0	80.0
330	33.0	49.5	66.0	82.5
340	34.0	51.0	68.0	85.0
350	35.0	52.5	70.0	87.5
360	36.0	54.0	72.0	90.0
370	37.0	55.5	74.0	92.5
380	38.0	57.0	76.0	95.0
390	39.0	58.5	78.0	97.5
400	40.0	60.0	80.0	100.0

¹Basic Llamas between 2 and 2.5 years carry no load other than saddle and empty panniers

Elevation Adjustment for Mileage Changes

Distance	Elevation Adjustment			
	Basic ¹	Advanced	Master	Elite
2	500			
3	250			
3.5	125			
4	0	1000		
5		750		
6		500	2000	
7		250	1750	
8		0	1500	3000
9			1250	2750
10			750	2500
11			500	2250
12			250	2000
13			0	1750
14				1500
15				1250
16				1000
17				750
18				500
19				250
20				0

Highlighted elevation indicates standard requirement.
Distances of less than standard are not recommended.



Appendix 2. Guide to Performance Objectives and Point Deductions

PERFORMANCE POINT DEDUCTION CRITERION

A single performance point should be deducted per task or obstacle whether the misbehavior takes place once or multiple times. For example, if during saddling a llama kicks once or kicks five times only one point will be deducted, however if a llama kicks and then spits, two points are deducted. The steward will record details of the point deductions for further review if necessary.

MANAGEABILITY TASKS

HALTERING

Objective: The llama should stand calmly and still while the handler takes the halter off and then puts it back on.

Performance points should be deducted if:

- The llama jumps around or kicks.
- The llama *tosses* its head around in an unsafe manner during the haltering process.
- The llama pushes the handler around with its body.
- The llama spits or screams.
- The handler is unable to either take the halter off or put it back on.

TRAILERING

Objective: The llama willingly enters and exits the trailer or vehicle.

Performance points should be deducted if:

- The llama balks or refuses to either enter or exit the trailer or vehicle.
- The llama leaps out of or into the trailer or vehicle in an unsafe manner.

PICKET LINE

Objective: The llama acts in a calm manner while attached to the picket line. If they become entangled in the line, but remain calm, that's OK.

Performance points should be deducted if:

- The llama becomes "hog-tied".
- The llama becomes tangled and panics.
- The llama pushes into the handler forcing them to lose their balance.

Note: If overnight camping took place and the llama was staked out all night without a problem, this task may be waived by the Trial Certifier.

SADDLING & PANNIER ATTACHMENT

Objective: The llama should stand calmly and still while saddling and while the panniers are attached. The handler may have assistance managing cinches and attaching panniers.

- String Trials require use of a chest strap on the lead llama if attaching the tied-in llama to the saddle of the lead llama.

Performance points should be deducted if:

- The llama spits.
- The llama kicks.
- The llama dances around avoiding the handler or saddle or panniers.
- If the handler is unable to safely saddle the llama or attach the panniers.



TIE-IN (String Trials Only)

Objective: The lead llama should stand calmly and still while the handler connects the trailing llama to the lead llama in string formation. The trailing llama should remain calm and quiet while close to the lead llama and during the tie-in process. (All connections or tie-ins between llamas must be done with a quick release knot or breakaway system.)

- Performance points are deducted for each llama independently. They are not applied to the entire string.

Performance points should be deducted if:

- A llama spits or kicks at the handler or at each other.
- A llama pushes into the handler forcing them to lose their balance or get entangled with the other llama.
- A llama dances around avoiding the tie-in process.
- A llama becomes entangled with the other llama
- If the handler is unable to safely tie-in the llamas.

FIELD TEST Course Obstacles And Trail Behavior

Llamas are allowed at least three attempts per obstacle. When on the fourth attempt the llama still refuses to move through the obstacle, the llama is disqualified and need not finish the course. Physically forcing a llama to negotiate an obstacle is not acceptable, but Stewards and handlers should be aware that llamas sometimes need time to assess an obstacle before committing to moving through it.

Objective: For all trail obstacles, the objective is that the llama safely and calmly negotiates each obstacle while demonstrating a degree of training appropriate to the level they are entered in.

Performance Point deductions are REQUIRED to be made for any of the following:

- The llama knocks the handler or any other person down.
- The llama jumps for any reason other than jumping a 'jump' obstacle.
- The llama kicks at its handler or any other person, llama, or trail occupant.
- When negotiating an obstacle, the llama lies down and refuses to attempt the obstacle.
- The llama lunges through an obstacle in an unsafe manner.
- The llama pushes its handler causing them to lose their balance.
- The llama tries to pass its handler on the trail or during an obstacle.
- The handler interferes with another person or llama

GROUNDS FOR DISQUALIFICATION

Disqualification usually involves llama behavior, but it can also be a result of handler actions. Any disputes will be resolved by the PLTA Certifier. Disqualification will be required if the llama:

- accumulates more than the allowable performance deductions
- refuses to attempt an obstacle on the fourth try
- cannot meet the time windows
- refuses to continue hiking
- is injured
- attacks or dangerously threatens another llama or person



Appendix 3. Pre-Trial Briefing for Participants and Handlers

Course Design

PLTA Pack Trials consist of two separate exams for the llama. The Manageability Tasks and the Field Test. Your llama must successfully pass both exams to complete the trial. Tasks and obstacles are graded on a pass/fail basis with the objective of getting the job done in a safe manner. Field Test courses vary depending on the trial level. Deviations from standards in distance/elevation gain and obstacles may have been made to accommodate local terrain. Obstacles will be clearly marked and/or fully explained by the Steward so that each participant knows what is expected of their llama.

Performance Deductions

Depending on the trial level you have entered, only a set number of Performance Points may be deducted for unacceptable or unsafe behavior by you or your llama before your llama will be disqualified from the trial. These deductions are cumulative from Manageability Tasks and the Field Test. If the limit of deductions is reached during manageability, the llama is disqualified and there is no need to undertake the Field Test.

<u>Trial Level</u>	<u>Deductions Allowed</u>
Basic	Five
Advanced	Three
Master	Two
Elite	Two

Manageability Tasks

You may have someone assist you with saddling and pack attachment. Manageability Tasks are evaluated on the behavior of the llama.

Field Test

Llamas are allowed three attempts for each obstacle. If on the fourth attempt the llamas still refuses they are disqualified and need not complete the course. Be aware that llamas sometimes need time to think over a situation and evaluate the obstacle before negotiating it. Llamas are judged on two criteria, behavior and completion. Safety is paramount.

Field Tests are judged on a pass/fail basis. As long as the llama negotiates the obstacle in a safe manner, they are judged successful. For example, on an Up/Down/Across obstacle if the llama is ‘pulled over’ the jump, it counts. If the llama nicks the top of the jump with a foot, it counts. If the llama jumps over the log but lands on the handler, it counts but a performance point is deducted. If the llama jumps over the log in the same way, but the handler is aware and moves out of the way, it counts with no performance deductions.

On obstacles where the packs or saddle is manipulated or foot is inspected, the handler may tie the llama to a stationary obstacle or have someone hold the llama during the process.

Llamas are required to walk through Foot Fear and Picking One’s Way obstacles, not jump over them. Handlers are allowed to have assistance holding their llama during Load Management obstacles.

Grounds for Disqualification

The steward will inform the handler when a deduction is made and will record the circumstances on the score sheet and will inform the handler if the number of allowable deductions has been exceeded. Any disputes will be settled by the PLTA Certifier. The most common reasons for disqualification are:

- Accumulation of more than the allowed number of Performance Deductions.
- Failure to complete an obstacle.
- Inability to maintain an acceptable pace or refusal to complete the course.

Trial Completion

When the trial is complete, the Steward will sign and date the score sheet and deliver them to the trial chairperson or secretary. Llamas successfully completing the trial will be given a Proof of Completion form signed and dated by the certifier and trial chairperson.



Appendix 4. Pack Trial Governance Committee

Pack Trial Governance Committee Charter

February 4, 2016

- I. Introduction
The continued growth and development of the PLTA has required a restructuring of tasks and functions. The Pack Trial Committee was created to function as the governing body for pack trials. The Committee will provide the first level of review to deal with Pack Trial issues. The Committee will also provide a link to the Board of Directors and other PLTA committees and programs.
- II. Statement of Purpose
The purpose of the Pack Trial Committee is to provide direction and support to persons involved in PLTA Pack Trial events. This Committee will maintain rigorous standards for the trials, resolve issues regarding those standards, and by defining safe practices will meet those ends. Encouraging an educational and socially rewarding atmosphere the Committee also provides a public friendly environment.
- III. Goals
The goals of the Pack Trial Committee are as follows:
 - A. Support an atmosphere of collegiality and professionalism at pack trials;
 - B. Resolve regulatory and procedural issues regarding pack trials;
 - C. Ensure that pack trial procedures establish a safe, enjoyable and educational experience for participants;
 - D. Provide authority to resolve disputes not resolvable by handlers, stewards, host or certifiers and ensure that disputes have a clear process for resolution;
 - E. Maintain and uphold consistent and stringent written standards for pack trials;
 - F. Ensure that pack trial procedures and regulations, are applicable across the variety of representative packing terrain and circumstances;
 - G. Ensure that the procedures for documentation of pack trial results are efficient and effective, and provide accurate long-term retention of records;
 - H. Ensure that training and training materials for certifiers and other officials are consistent and appropriate;
 - I. Ensure that PLTA members and the public understand the function of pack trials and know that their input will be heard and is considered valuable; and
 - J. Ensure that appropriate documentation of all training requirements, rules and procedures is readily available to PLTA members and the public.
- IV. Pack Trial Committee Chairperson
 - A. PLTA Committee Chairperson, appointed by the BOD, oversees the Pack Trial Committee, which reviews and adjusts rules and procedures for the pack trials.
 - B. The PLTA Chairperson's responsibilities are as follows:
 - 1. Coordinates with PLTA President to set committee goals, objectives, priorities and agenda; and
 - 2. Provides leadership to the committee by designating duties to committee members and maintaining effective communications.
 - 3. If circumstances dictate, may also serve as Pack Trial Manager.
- V. Pack Trial Program Manager
 - A. Program Manager, Responsibilities include:
 - 1. Supports the Pack Trial Committee;
 - 2. Manages trial data;
 - 3. Interfaces with Trial Hosts;
 - 4. Sanctions trials; and
 - 5. Communicates results with PLTA Secretary and Website Administrator.



VI. Authority

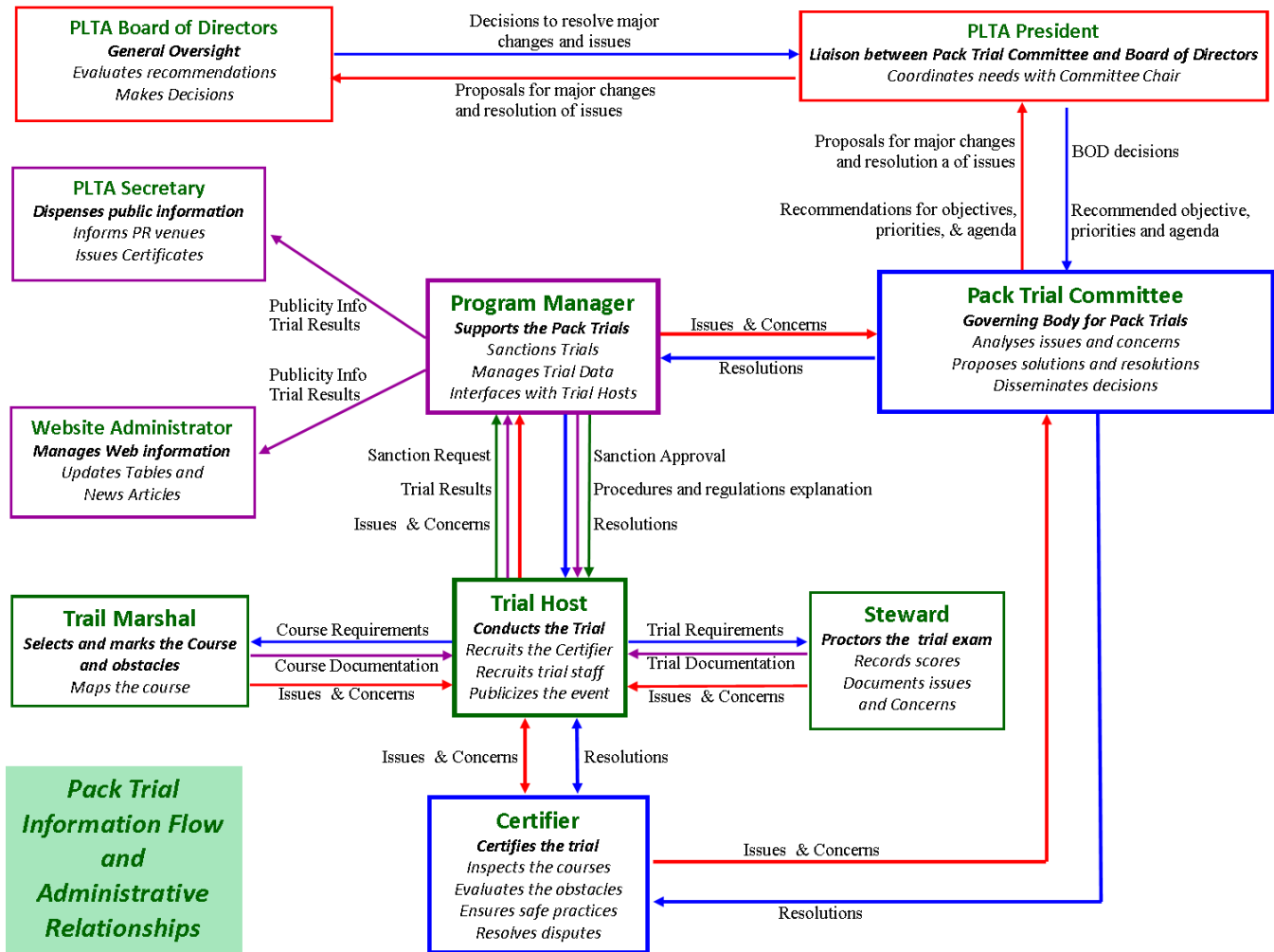
- A. Any issue confronting the Pack Trial Committee that may affect the well-being of the PLTA or other committees and programs must be presented first; to the PLTA President, followed by the Board of Directors. The Pack Trial Committee will, to the best of their ability, attempt to reconcile all “Pack Trial” issues that emerge while, at all times, keeping the President apprised of issues.

- B. The Pack Trial Committee Chairperson will coordinate with other PLTA Committee Chairpersons to maintain administrative consistency. Any and all proposals by individuals for changes to the pack trials will route through the Pack Trial Committee. After consideration by the Committee, proposals will be routed to the Board of Directors for definitive action as is appropriate. The Pack Trial Committee will be responsible for considering issues and providing options for resolution and the improvement of Pack Trials.

VIII. Members

- A. Committee Members
The recommended number of members is 6 – 10 will provide a diverse enough group to balance responsibilities and ensure a broad scope of thought, ideas, and opinions.

- B. Committee Member Obligations
Throughout the year, Committee members will be asked for their opinion and analysis of issues. Any member who finds the obligations too demanding may depart the committee after giving a minimum of a two week notice to the Chairperson. If Committee members are unwilling to adequately participate they may be asked by the Committee Chair to resign. One avenue of sharing will be the Yahoo Pack Trial group site at groups.io. Members are required to gain access to and participate in discussions on the site.





The Pack Llama Trail Association (PLTA) is a nonprofit corporation created in 1999 under Idaho code. Its mission is to preserve and promote working llamas through education of PLTA members and the public as to the breeding, raising, training, care, and safe and humane uses of working llamas as companions. This is a volunteer organization created, managed, and run by the effort of numerous generous individuals.

PLTA Pack Trials demonstrate the skill and natural ability of pack llamas. The trials test llamas against a written standard that allows evaluation and recognition of a llama's ability to perform in realistic packing conditions. Four levels of fitness and skill are recognized. Llamas earning certification as PLTA packers have demonstrated true packing proficiency.